

Yuri Barabash

AESTHETICS AND POETICS

**ART, IDEOLOGY
AND POLITICS**



**ALPHA
AND OMEGA**



**"HE IS
AS SIMPLE
AS THE TRUTH..."**



**THAT
IMPORTANT SALIERI...**

Yuri Barabash

AESTHETICS
AND
POETICS



Progress Publishers
Moscow

Translated from the Russian
Designed by *Yakov Malikov*

Юрий Барабаш
ВОПРОСЫ ЭСТЕТИКИ И ПОЭТИКИ
На английском языке

First printing 1977

© Издательство «Современник», 1973

© Издательство «Прогресс», 1977, с изменениями

© Translation into English. Progress Publishers 1977

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Б $\frac{10507-915}{014(01)-77}$ 110—77

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Preface	5
Art, Ideology and Politics	7
Alpha and Omega	81
"He Is as Simple as the Truth"	157
That Importunate Salieri	197

PREFACE

I am not very fond of reading or writing prefaces. Still, there are a few preliminary remarks I would like to make concerning this edition.

It is no secret that many in the West neither accept nor properly understand the majority of problems treated in this book. The Leninist concept of cultural revolution, the policies of the CPSU in the area of culture, socialist realism, partisanship in art and art's affinity to the people—how many false rumours, misunderstandings and confusion surround these ideas! I do not flatter myself with the hope that my book will make doubters change their minds, or that it will answer all the perplexing questions that arise, but I would like to think that it will not be entirely without use in this respect.

And here an important question arises: to whom, exactly, should the book address itself?

Among those who do not accept our aesthetics and our art, there are some who, as the Bible puts it, "have ears, but they hear not; eyes have they, but they see not". I am speaking of those who have made a profession of libel and ideological sabotage. For a self-respecting scholar arguing with them is out of the question. Frankly, I count least of all on their attention, but if they do, in fact, take notice, I will try to answer them as the situation demands.

I have in mind another sort of reader, one who is genuinely interested in Soviet literature and art, one who sincerely wishes to know our culture, to understand its unique features and principles, but who is often prevented from doing so because of inadequate knowledge, misinformation or preconceptions of various sorts. This is the reader with whom I wish to speak and debate in earnest without grudging the time or energy.

I will be pleased if my book contributes in any degree to this sort of constructive dialogue.

ART, IDEOLOGY
AND POLITICS

Scarcely anyone today (with the possible exception of those who are generally inclined to close their eyes to the truth) would seriously doubt that the development of art depends on the political and ideological climate of the planet or that art is directly linked with the everyday cares and anxieties of humanity.

Never before, perhaps, have people so clearly recognised how closely their lives are bound up with the lives of others, and at the same time they never have been so keenly aware of the devious, centrifugal forces at work in the world today. And all this is reflected in some form or another in art, or rather, this is the *life blood* of modern art, which is shaken by the unending conflict of opposing forces and tendencies.

One of the remarkable features which we experience at this particular point in history is the fact that artistic creativity has been shifted to the epicentre of the battle of ideas, into the whirlpool of political passions of the age, and that some of keenest conflicts are taking place in this sphere.

It is in its own way revealing that the majority of bourgeois authors also view art and literature as one of the most important scenes for ideological struggle. For example, Richard V. Allen, Research Principal of the Center for Strategic Studies at Georgetown University, cites literature and art as among the most important factors (second only to education) which determine the ideological preparedness of the communist world that he hates.¹ Receiving active support from Bertram D. Wolfe, author of

¹ See Richard V. Allen, *Peace or Peaceful Coexistence?* American Bar Association. Standing Committee on Education Against Communism, Chicago, 1966.

the foreword to his book, Allen openly calls for an intensification of the cold war in all areas, but especially in the areas of art and culture.

Theories and concepts of art which only recently seemed to be the province of men in ivory towers (even scholastic, one might say) are today of the most topical interest. They have become the object of heated discussions that involve not only specialists, but people from every walk of life. Aesthetics has literally felt the full force of the winds of change—social, political and ideological.

One could say, and not without good reason, that this has always been the case. Already in ancient times art developed in conjunction with politics and religion, and Thomas Mann, for example, regarded this indisputable fact as evidence of the oneness of humanity. In *Joseph and His Brothers* he describes how the young pharaoh Amenhotep (also known as Akhenaton) regarded the "graphic adornment of the world" with such "fervent and even zealous attention", and in this passion for art the author sees a strong desire to destroy the traditional, fossilised, sacred, obligatory "world of images" which helps the priesthood maintain its privileges and power. "To weaken, or far better, to utterly destroy these fetters of images for the sake of a new truth and a new gaiety which the god Aton had revealed to the pharaoh—that would deal a crushing blow to Amon-Ra, whose politics and religion were indissolubly linked with certain canons of visual art."¹

This point, incidentally, is also underscored by Georgi Gulia in his novel *Pharaoh Akhenaton*. Akhenaton's struggle with the priesthood here is organically related to the struggle for a new, just and profoundly humane art, and the artists close to the pharaoh, above all the sculptor Jekhutimes, are in the very centre of the political and religious intrigues of the day. Akhenaton has good reason to appreciate their work: "Keme [what the ancient Egyptians called their land—Y.B.] is the greatest creation of the omnipresent, all-seeing god of all creation. And the best that Keme has produced is its sculptors and writers, its architects and musicians."²

¹ Thomas Mann, *Joseph und seine Brüder*, Berlin, 1956, S. 107, 108.

² Georgi Gulia, *Faraon Ekhnaton* (Pharaoh Akhenaton), Moscow, 1969, p. 333.

Many of Thomas Mann's ideas are echoed in S. H. Vatsyayan's contribution to the discussion on Poetry and Politics organised by the Hindi journal *Alochana* in 1969. Bringing the discussion to a close, Vatsyayan noted that the problem under review had existed since the very inception of poetry, that such classical Indian works as the *Rigveda* and the *Mahabharata*, not to mention the satires of Kshemendra (11th century) or the works of Bkharatendu (19th century) were permeated with political thought and the political passions of the day.

In short, inherent to the very nature of art are its ties with social life, with the ideas of the age and with political conflict.

In the same address, however, after his excursus into history, Vatsyayan thought it necessary to emphasise that under present circumstances the question of poetry's ties with politics is *especially* pertinent and poignant, and this is becoming clearer and clearer to both artists and politicians. And although individual participants in the discussion expressed their misgivings concerning the merging of poetry and politics, the leitmotif running through the discussion remained the idea that the ties between poetry and politics constitute one of the fundamental subjects of contemporary aesthetics, brought to the forefront by the very logic of modern social development, the sharp intensification of the conflict of ideas, the confrontation between the forces of reaction and progress, war and peace, the old and the new.

All the world heard Maxim Gorky when he asked, "Whose side are you on, artists?" That question is still on the agenda. Life poses this question every day with utmost poignancy, demanding that the artist give a direct and unequivocal answer.

Two worlds—two cultures. This formula describing the real alignment of forces is as pertinent as it ever was. In the modern world two cultures stand in opposition to each other: one brings to mankind the high ideals of freedom, peace and the flowering of the human personality and by its very nature is profoundly creative; the other is a false culture inextricably rooted in the philosophy of the bourgeoisie, an art which promulgates the most reactionary and inhumane ideas of the age.

The imperialistic oligarchy needs the sort of art which can help it maintain and strengthen the foundations of bourgeois society, which will stifle man's longing for freedom and raise him in the spirit of anti-humanism and distrust in ideals. And this sort of art exists. Many books published in capitalist countries with editions running into the millions, the cinema, television and the theatre, the bourgeois press, radio—every day, every hour, every minute the media delude man morally and spiritually. What is presented is filled to overflowing with violence, misanthropy, war and frenzied anti-communism, and it all plays on man's basest instincts and passions.

Here is only one example of the many which could, so to speak, be offered up as evidence.

"Everybody is the enemy. Moreover, the enmity is curiously detached. It is like the enmity between animals; there is nothing personal in it. It is the competitive spirit in evolutionary survival, the clash of antagonists moved by laws having nothing to do with love or hate, judgment or conviction." That is how Leo Gurko, a liberally inclined American professor, characterises the "thrillers" that have acquired such a vast audience in the West. Gurko's description is by no means restricted to the wicked characters in these novels—gangsters, murderers, sadists and the like. No, emphasises Gurko, "the general predatory air infects the police too. They are as ruthless and as prone to using the third degree as are the men they pursue. . . . The lines between civilization and savagery begin to disappear. . . ."¹ An atmosphere of total, all-embracing cruelty is created, exercising a destructive influence on the human psyche.

Inhumane? Immoral? Yet such art not only exists, but flourishes with the most active assistance of Big Business. Wherever everything is bought and sold there will always be hacks ready to offer their professional services to their masters.

As for business, it has recently been aspiring to the role of a contemporary Medici, which has made its apologists ecstatic. Thus Arnold Gingrich in his book *Business and the Arts: an Answer for Tomorrow* speaks in lofty tones about Big Business' desire to give financial aid to the arts. But the rather loud voices of sceptics can be

¹ Leo Gurko, *Crisis of the American Mind*, London, 1956, p. 131.

heard. In an essay published in *Evergreen* (July 1969) John Lahr, for example, disputes Gingrich's claims and convincingly demonstrates that the tenuous ties between business and art are hardly likely to become a marriage of love—a marriage of convenience would be a better way of putting it.

But one should not oversimplify the relationship between capital (or "treasurers", as in Barrows Dunham's book *Thinkers and Treasurers*) and art. Cash and profits, it goes without saying, play an enormous role, but the root of the matter goes much deeper. The imperialistic oligarchy includes literature and art in its system of manipulation, whose goal is to work on the personality in a specific way, to limit its development to a single track in line with the requirements of modern capitalist production and new tasks of consolidating the political power of the bourgeoisie. We are speaking here of the creation of a culture industry which will serve as a component in the drive against ideology of socialism and anti-imperialist, democratic forces.

Given these conditions, of course, businessman so-and-so who invests his money in the publication of comics or in the production of a film or TV show is much more likely to be concerned about profits than politics. But if one takes bourgeois society as a whole and the major currents running through it, it turns out that commerce and politics are inextricably bound together. In his essay "Culture, Semi-culture and False Culture" the Bulgarian writer Bogomil Rainov was right in pointing out the intimate connection between two aspects of this problem—the ideological and commercial. Noting that "the commercialisation of spiritual values is a common feature of capitalism, manifesting itself in all spheres of art and culture", Rainov also emphasises that the tasks and goals of bourgeois mass art are not limited to this. "Mass culture is a means for achieving a certain *ideological effect*. And this effect is achieved through clear or masked political tendencies, and through extremely widespread apolitical tendencies."¹

¹ Bogomil Rainov, "Kultura, polukultura i lzhekultura" (Culture, Semi-culture and False Culture), *Literaturen front*, Oct. 28, 1971.

But the political tendencies, particularly the explicit ones, assume the upper hand. Particularly revealing in this respect is the fact that in recent years purely propagandistic, militaristic, openly anti-communist themes have taken on greater and greater prominence in pseudo-cultural works designed for mass consumption. More and more often detective fiction is infused with spy mania, and super-heroes like James Bond or Mike Hammer come to do battle with the "red threat" or perform "courageous feats" on the front-lines in Indochina.

This fusion of reactionary bourgeois art with the ideology and practice of anti-communism is well documented by V. Golovanov in his study of contemporary American cinema, especially when he deals with such films as Alfred Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* and *Topaz*, Martin Ritt's *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, and John Huston's *The Kremlin Letter*. The section entitled "The Pentagon and Hollywood" is particularly interesting; here the author reveals how the Department of Defense uses people like Bob Hope, Darryl Zannuck and John Wayne. The story behind *The Green Berets* is typical. "The Pentagon," writes the author, "at first objected to the production of the film and put strong pressure on the studio, fearing that it would choose a director like Stanley Kramer who would turn the film into an exposé. When super-hawk John Wayne indicated a desire to produce the film, the Pentagon not only gave its blessing, but also provided the production crew with a military base—a Green Berets' training centre—and covered a good deal of the expenses incurred during filming."¹

In the bourgeois world, of course, there are many artists who will have nothing to do with this sort of despicable work. Many of them stress their non-acceptance of politics, and not only the politics of imperialism, but politics in general, politics as such. They prefer to remain uncommitted. But life takes a cruel revenge on those who try to ignore its laws, and sooner or later it forces one to come to terms with it. Countless examples—extremely instructive examples—could be cited in support of this fact.

¹ V. E. Golovanov, *Osobennosti ideinoi borby v amerikanskom kino 60kh godov* (Aspects of Ideological Struggle in the American Cinema in the 1960s), Moscow, 1971, p. 14.

We might recall that Romain Rolland wrote a book called *Au-dessus de la mêlée* which reflected the profound contradictions in the author's ideological and political position during the First World War, his illusions, his naïve conviction that one must fight "only against hatred, not against war itself". Many years later, in 1931, the author returned to this book, his *Journal des années de guerre*, and called his delusions "a tragedy" and an "inner drama". He wrote an essay called "Adieu au passé", an astonishingly human and, if you please, political document, for, in the words of the author, "a whole generation of a class in the West, a dying class", should recognise itself in this confession "if it is not afraid to look itself in the face". He spoke with winsome sincerity about the path of the honest Western intellectual, a path strewn with "prejudices torn up by the root, shattered illusions, discarded friendships" and leading to an awareness that "the arrow of the compass points to the North, the goal toward which the vanguard of Europe is marching, the heroic revolutionaries of the USSR; that goal is the social and moral rebuilding of mankind".¹

Another manifesto by a leading artist—Thomas Mann's *Kultur und Politik* (1939)—could also be called a "parting with the past".

Here too we confront the drama of twentieth century bourgeois thought—searching, hesitating, erring. Before us is the path of a man leading from *Reflections of an Apolitical Man*, a title which speaks for itself, to a recognition that "being apolitical is nothing less than being simply *anti* democratic", that "when culture rejects politics, the result is error and self-delusion; it is impossible to withdraw from politics in this fashion—one only ends up in the wrong camp". Recalling how at one time, "in the name of culture and even freedom I resisted with all my strength what I called 'democracy', meaning the politicisation of spiritual life", Thomas Mann says that life taught him, and many like him, a terrible and convincing lesson, graphically revealing the shameful ties between the apolitical aesthetic German burgher spirit and the most extreme forms of political terror, barbarism and totalitarianism.

¹ Romain Rolland, *Quinze ans de combat (1919-1934)*, Paris, 1935, p. 158, 143, 144, 187.

"The fact," he says, "that I realised I was on the side of democracy was the result of convictions that did not come easily and were initially alien to me, a man who grew up and was educated in the spiritual traditions of German burgher society; yes, I arrived at the conviction that what is political and social is an indivisible part of what is human and enters into the one problem of humanism, into which our intellect must include it, and that in this problem a dangerous hiatus destructive for culture may manifest itself if we ignore the political, social element inherent to it."¹

The turning points of history reveal the true price of imaginary apoliticism with utmost clarity, as Mann convincingly demonstrates when he cites the example of Arthur Schopenhauer, "Nietzsche's predecessor in the area of anti-intellectualism". This scholar and philosopher, who declared that politics was philistinism, in 1848 called the revolutionary people "all-powerful scum" and "demonstratively proffered his opera-glasses to the officer who stood at the windows of his flat carrying out reconnaissance of the barricades so that it would be easier to direct fire against the insurrectionists". "Is that what it means to be above politics?" the writer exclaims.²

We should recall these lessons more often. For the bourgeoisie today continues to increase and perfect its ability to play on notorious "anti-political" tendencies, and the danger of ending up in the camp of reactionaries may threaten the artist and intellectual who does not want to take any sides. Such is the logic of the battle, especially—here Mann is so, so right—at history's turning point.

But it should be noted that today the spirit of the age is making itself felt: more and more specialists and those working in the arts are taking account of the politicisation of art going on today, the fact that art is engrossed with essential questions of the political struggle and the concerns of mankind. We must concur with Soviet critic Boris Suchkov³ when he says that the process of politicisa-

¹ Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, 12. Band, Berlin, 1955, S. 831, 830, 828.

² Ibid.

³ See Boris Suchkov, "Politika i literatura" (Politics and Literature), *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 3, 1971.

tion is by no means spontaneous, but brought about by weighty and objective factors: the intensification of the class struggle and national liberation movements, the internal contradictions of capitalism, the heightened consciousness of the working class and youth in bourgeois countries, the increasing influence of scientific socialism. Also of great significance are certain changes in the social status of the intelligentsia, its growing dependence on the capitalist establishment and its recognition—often very painful—of this dependence.

It is another matter altogether that the politicisation of art is interpreted in different ways by different people and that in the very process itself there are not only positive elements, but also serious drawbacks, negative aspects and distortions. Here we find vulgar sectarian theories that clearly smack of anti-Sovietism; we also find petty-bourgeois adventurism, and intensely galvanised Trotskyist views.

Also exerting a certain influence on a part of the Western intelligentsia, including some men of letters, is the so-called "critical theory" of the Frankfurt school (Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and others), from whose arsenal such leaders and ideologists of the New Left as Rudi Dutschke derive a good deal.¹ For example, in his conception of "The Great Refusal" Herbert Marcuse assigns a very important role to art. In art (or rather, in anti-art) he sees the power of revolt and rebellion, carrying an enormous destructive charge.

It is curious, incidentally, that Marcuse's own aesthetic tastes are most conservative, even élitist. In the index to Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1960) one will find neither Lessing, nor Schiller, nor Heine, nor Heinrich and Thomas Mann, nor Hauptmann; nor can one find Hugo, Zola and Anatole France. Marcuse's favourite authors are Paul Valéry, Charles Baudelaire, Stefan George, and Rainer Maria Rilke. What affinity these largely disparate authors have with Marcuse's ideas of anarchistic rebellion is difficult to say; what plays the decisive role here are the purely

¹ Theo Pirker, "Herbert Marcuses metaphysische Revolution, ihre Junger und Kritiker", in *Permanente Revolution von Marx bis Marcuse*, München, 1969, S. 121.

subjective tastes of the author; he takes great relish in quoting those very passages which affirm the cult of "pure" poetry, an anti-democratic spirit and aesthetic dandyism.

Marcuse's typical cultural pessimism, undoubtedly influenced by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Freud, his opposition to technology and rejection of contemporary civilisation find their expression in his attitude to ancient cultures. There is an elegiac, mournful tone recalling Lenau or Brentano in those lines from *One-Dimensional Man* where Marcuse writes about "pre-technological" lyrics and prose which recorded "the rhythm of the life of people who travelled on foot or rode in coaches, who had both the time and desire to meditate, to think over things, to feel and to talk".¹ And although Marcuse understands that this culture is "old-fashioned and antiquated", he nonetheless does not cease to hope for the possibility of its restoration. His personal aesthetic aspirations are directed at the past.

But here is a paradox in aesthetic practice Marcuse's ideas are interpreted above all in the light of various manifestations of the avant-gardist "total rebellion", the rejection of tradition, the destruction of form, the dismantling of "bourgeois" genres, and so on, leading even to the outright negation of literature and art. Such ideas are readily discernible in the West German magazine *Kursbuch*, published by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, a leading poet who unfortunately is hardly likely to win fame as a theoretician.

Especially since May 1968, Jean-Paul Sartre has also been seriously concerned with such tendencies. He headed the extreme leftist newspaper *La Cause du peuple* and lent his name to a leftist edition given the extravagant name *L'Idiot international*, whose director for some time was Simone de Beauvoir. Subsequently, it is true, both Sartre and Beauvoir split with *L'Idiot*, but on the other hand they did participate in the creation of *J'accuse*, a "leftist" monthly.

These and other such facts (described in greater length

¹ Herbert Marcuse, *Der eindimensionale Mensch. Studien zur Ideologie der fortgeschrittenen Industriegesellschaft*, Neuwied, 1968, S. 79.

in Suchkov's essay "Politics and Literature") testify to the ambiguity of the current process of art's politicisation, the complexity and contradictory aspects of the development of world culture and aesthetic thought.

In analysing the specific features of this development, we should constantly bear in mind Lenin's ideas on two nations in each nation, the presence of two cultures in each national culture characterised by antagonistic forces within. In contemporary Western culture there are important forces resisting reactionary tendencies. These forces above all consist of communist artists who have allied themselves and their art with the contemporary revolutionary movement, with the life and struggle of the masses. We understand and sympathise with those honourable humanist artists of the West who suffer the painful experience of witnessing the deformity of their environment and reality, who are trying to find a way out of the contradictions they confront. But one must also recognise that because they are limited by their bourgeois world outlook and at times pay considerable tribute to decadence, these artists are, for the most part, incapable of finding a way out and are blind to those social forces to which the future belongs.

Socialist art is the primary force resisting reactionary tendencies in world culture today, standing up to the art of disintegration and inhumanity. Socialist art incorporates the most progressive ideals of the epoch; it is deeply rooted in the revolutionary class struggle of the working masses. This is what determines the growing influence, the consolidation of socialist realism, and represents the most significant tendency in contemporary art.

The art of socialist realism selects and artistically assimilates all the best achievements of mankind. We are proud of this continuity. We consider ourselves the lawful heirs of all that has been accumulated by preceding generations, and an attitude of nihilism toward this priceless heritage is profoundly alien to us, even when masked by the most radical slogans.

At the same time we stress that socialist art is genuinely innovative, for it is inspired by the most progressive idea of modern times, the idea of transforming the world on the basis of socialism, and it participates fully in this transformation, being entirely rooted in the rich soil of

the historical experience of the masses who are creating a new life.

Lenin dreamed of a free literature which would enrich mankind's revolutionary ideas with the experience and real work of the socialist proletariat. Today we can assert with complete assurance that there now exists such a literature and such an art. This art is occupying a stronger and stronger position on the world stage and is attracting the hearts and minds of millions.

Given the acute ideological struggle (and that struggle, as we mentioned, is a stern feature of modern life) and in light of the crucial problems of communist construction, we find particular relevance in Lenin's statements regarding the development of socialist culture, his views on art and its role in society. Life demands that we turn again and again to the aesthetics of Leninism, to the Leninist principles of a scientific, purposeful influence of the artistic process and the formation of its results.

Here it is particularly important to keep one essential factor in mind. The authority of Lenin's teachings is so great today, the historical rightness of Leninism is so obvious that even our most vehement opponents, assuming they are not blind, begin to surmise that to reject or repudiate Leninism is pointless, and no one will win laurels doing so. And thus perfidious tactical devices are attributed greater significance.

It is telling, for example, that the anti-communist colloquium which took place in the West German town of Tönisstein in 1967, in searching for ways to influence the policies of the CPSU and other fraternal parties, devoted special attention to revisionist movements, which, they hoped, would lead to the so-called liberalisation of communism.¹

Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's National Security Advisor, actively propagandises this tactic in his works. Although he takes a sceptical view of the theory of convergence between the political systems of the United States and the Soviet Union, a view widely held among bourgeois sociologists, he nonetheless does not

¹ See *Kolloquium Tönisstein, 22-23 September 1967. Communist Reassessment of Capitalism: alt's Resultant Strategy and Western Response.*

exclude the possibility that ideological sabotage against the USSR and other socialist countries could lead to an erosion in the ideological perspectives of these countries and in the end bring them back to the bosom of Western civilisation.¹

In the humanities, and particularly in philosophy, persistent attempts are made to erode the contours of Leninism, to distort and revise certain ideas, to integrate Leninism with every conceivable view or movement profoundly alien to it. Hence, for example, the rise of a phenomenological existentialist variant of Marxism, supported by certain participants of the international symposium on Marxism and Phenomenology which took place in Sarajevo in 1966.²

It is amazing, the variety of people who call themselves Marxists and the various attempts that are made to synthesise it with just about everything.

Some people consider Marcuse a Marxist, although his theory, needless to say, has nothing in common with genuine Marxism, as is convincingly demonstrated, incidentally, by the West German Marxist philosopher Robert Steigerwald. Also, if one believes what publishers say, the French journal *Tel Quel* is also Marxist, though in fact it presents the reader with an absurd mixture of avant-garde experimental works and political extremism. In his interview with the Czechoslovak newspaper *Literární noviny* (July 26, 1966) Erich Fromm declared that it was not only possible, but absolutely necessary to establish a synthesis between Marxism and Freudianism; the editorial board of the newspaper was in full agreement with Fromm, noting, as though it were something quite beyond question, that opinions regarding the incompatibility of Marxist philosophy and Freudian psychoanalysis had to a considerable degree been repudiated.

The modernisation of our opponents' tactical arsenal is also characteristic for a number of Western "specialists" writing about Soviet art and the CPSU policies in the area

¹ See Z. Brzezinski, S. Huntington, *Political Power: USA/USSR. Similarities and Contrasts. Convergence or Evolution*, New York, 1964; Z. Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, New York, 1965.

² See S. M. Braiovich, "On an Attempt to Establish Affinities Between Marxism and Existentialism", *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 7, 1971.

of culture. This is not to say, of course, that the old methods—blatant falsehood, slander, provocation—have been withdrawn from the arsenal. Still, times have changed. The hypocritical complaints of bourgeois well-wishers that the Leninist principle of partisanship supposedly means a rejection of creative freedom represent a commonplace, worn-out banality, and frontal attacks on the Leninist concept of culture can no longer be counted on for their propagandistic effect. Instead attempts are now being made to attack Leninist aesthetics from the flank, from the rear, and sometimes even allegedly from the position of Leninism itself. An extremely popular device, for example, is to expostulate the principles of Leninism while observing certain external features of "objectivity", but then to set these principles demagogically in opposition to the cultural policies of the CPSU and the party's guidance in the field of art after Lenin's death. Typical in this respect is a book published recently in the United States by G. Yermolayev entitled *Soviet Literary Theories: 1917-1934: the Genesis of Socialist Realism*. In works by his colleagues as well—Gleb Struve, Mark Slonim, William Harkins, Vyacheslav Setschkareff and others—the history of Soviet literature, as Soviet literary critic A. Metchenko points out, is also "concocted according to the recipes of the CIA or popular detective films, a story of conspiracies, attempted assassinations, acts of violence and horrors".¹

But what do they have to offer? They make no secret of the fact that they are our outright political and ideological opponents. But the tactic mentioned above is also applied by those who until recently considered themselves Marxists. Thus Roger Garaudy in his book *For a French Model of Socialism* associating the name of Lenin with various anti-realist tendencies active in Soviet art in the first years after the October Revolution declares: "Russian painting ... blossomed remarkably during Lenin's lifetime. ... Kandinsky was vice-president of the Academy of Fine Arts, Chagall, and after him Malevitch, were the directors of the Vitebsk School of Painting, La-

¹ A. Metchenko, *Krovnoye, zavoyovannoye. Iz istorii sovetskoi literatury* (Vital Conquests: Pages from the History of Soviet Literature), Moscow, 1971, pp. 16-17.

rionov and Goncharova were considered the leading figures in new Soviet painting....” In this context the author also cites Tatlin, Jakobson, Brik and others, whose activities, in his opinion, marked the flowering of the new Soviet art. “But after Lenin’s death,” we read, “bureaucratic distortions became a permanent trait of the Soviet regime,”¹ which, if we are to believe Garaudy, had a profound effect on Soviet art.

The myth which makes the first post-revolutionary years a “golden age” when (ostensibly under Lenin’s patronage!) avant-garde experimentalism blossomed, which claims that this experimentalism constituted the essence of young Soviet art, thereby captivating the “whole world of culture”—this myth, first taken up by reactionary Slavists, has willingly been accepted as a weapon by revisionist aestheticians and critics. In the work by Metchenko cited above one can find a broad overview of the way this false myth is supported and blown up, and by whom.

One can say, of course, and quite rightly so, that the appearance of these tendencies is itself revealing, testifying in the end to the victorious power of Leninism. If some teaching or ideology forces its opponents to make tactical manoeuvres, to search for “detours”, to reform, does not that mean above all that the given teaching or ideology has become a real acknowledged force which must be reckoned with, a force which has proved its viability and promise?

It is quite tempting to conclude on this basis that the danger of revision, erosion or disruption from within is not all that serious for such an ideology. But that is too hasty a conclusion. The more impressive and indisputable the power of Leninism, the more refined and cunning the methods used in the struggle by our ideological enemies. And it naturally follows that we must perfect our ability to recognise manifestations of hostile ideology behind any, even the most “arch-Marxist”, mask, and we must refine our methods of exposing these alien views and ideas for what they are.

¹ Roger Garaudy, *Pour un modèle français du socialisme*, Paris, 1968, p. 144, 147.

Several decades ago it was quite commonly assumed that Marx and Engels, occupied primarily with economic problems, paid little attention to literature and art, that we discover only incidental observations and personal opinions in their scholarly, journalistic and epistolary works. In the writings of bourgeois philosophers one could encounter the assertion that the classics of Marxism expressed no orderly cultural and philosophical world outlook, that their attitude toward art, just like their attitude toward nature and religion, bore the imprint of positivism, and so on.

But bourgeois critics were not the only ones at fault here. Even many Marxist authors of the time believed that when Mehring and Plekhanov took up questions of aesthetics, they had to work from scratch in this province, relying only on the most general principles of dialectical materialism. This view was not quick to die. As late as 1929 M. Pokrovsky wrote in an essay "In Memory of Comrade Friche" that there was no Marxist theory of artistic creation as such, that ostensibly it had yet "to be created".¹ This point of view was supported by Friche himself, who attempted not only to formulate such a theory, filling in the missing links, but also, in a number of instances, to "touch up" Marx's outlook on art. Such was the idea behind Friche's "law of the primacy in the field of art of that country to which the primacy belongs in the field of economy".

Commenting on such views, Mikhail Lifschitz noted in those years that this was possible because Marx's and Engels' judgments concerning art were assumed to be "related to the *personality* of each of the founders of Marxism rather than to their *teachings*"; the sum of their aesthetic views were regarded as an expression of "*personal taste*, and not theory".²

Such views have long since been repudiated in modern literary scholarship. Today one hears comments about the

¹ *Marksistskoye iskusstvoznaniye i V. M. Friche* (The Marxist Approach to Art and V. M. Friche), Moscow, 1931, p. 29.

² Mikhail Lifschitz, *Voprosy iskusstva i filosofii* (Problems of Art and Philosophy), Moscow, 1935, pp. 144-45.

"unproductivity" of the Marxist approach to art only from the lips of malicious and not too literate falsifiers like Peter Demetz, or from people who have only the vaguest idea of Marxism (and quite a few of its critics fall into this category). On the whole one has every right to say that this absolutely groundless opinion has long since been repudiated by real facts concerning the development of Marxist Leninist aesthetic thought. Much has been done in this respect by Soviet scholars and their colleagues in other socialist countries; the authors who have written major works on this subject in recent years include A. Dymshitz, A. Iezuitov, M. Lifschitz, B. Meilakh, A. Myasnikov, M. Ovsyannikov, B. Ryurikov, G. Fridlender (USSR), T. Pavlov (Bulgaria), H. Koch and K. Träger (GDR), S. Pazura (Poland) and others.

In their time, of course, Mehring and Plekhanov did in fact make a substantial contribution to the elaboration of Marxist aesthetics. But one should bear in mind that, as a rule, what is most valuable and productive in their theoretical and literary historical heritage comes straight from Marx and Engels, while errors and elements of inconsistency and limitation are related to their superficial familiarity with the aesthetic concepts of the founders of Marxism. Moreover, no matter how considerable the services rendered by Mehring and Plekhanov in investigating art on the basis of Marxism, they were not able to withstand the tendencies of vulgarisation and opportunism (in the sphere of aesthetics as well) which were so widespread during the time of the Second International, although both Marxists did a good deal in the struggle against those tendencies.

One must also bear in mind that at the turn of the century Marx's and Engels' views on art had not been summarised, studied and recognised as scientific, and much that may have already been known had not been properly interpreted. This was also true of the problem of exerting a purposeful influence on the development of art, the problem of guiding the literary process. But in the first place this issue proceeded organically from those works, letters and utterances of Marx and Engels where they were speaking of the purposefulness and partisanship of the art of the socialist proletariat, and in the second place one of the things that could have helped in

this case was extensive research into the interrelation between Marx and Engels and the artists of the time. From this point of view Mehring's works on Heine, Freiligrath and Herwegh, despite the crucial errors contained therein, were of considerable importance. But they represented merely a prelude, so to speak, to the main theme.

Be that as it may, the conditions at the time were such that they permitted the appearance of several pseudo-socialist and anti-Marxist concepts and theories which presented the relationship between art and socialism in a false light.

A typical example was a booklet called *Socialism and Art* by Jules Destrée, a leading Belgian socialist. One of the chapters was called "Why the State Has Obligations with Respect to Art, and What These Obligations Are". The author compares the work of an artist with that of a cobbler or a chemist and explains why, in his view, the former requires the patronage of the state, whereas the latter two do not. Destrée's arguments are, on the whole, correct, though naïve, and we need not dwell on them. More essential are the author's reflections on whether the state should not only encourage the development of art in every way and patronise artists, but also "confer honour on art, reward artists with laurels and distinctions". The author's position here is expressed unambiguously and energetically. "When the state," writes Destrée, "evaluates and directs art, it oversteps its bounds."¹

In another chapter entitled "The State Is Obligated to Grant Freedom to Art", Destrée emphasises that when the state directs artistic activity, the result is inevitably "official art", i.e., something which Destrée does not consider art at all. Any guiding influence on art is, in the author's opinion, coercion, and "art requires total freedom". Destrée concludes, "The state only has responsibilities with respect to art, and no rights; it must try to serve science and art, and not force them to serve the state."²

Perhaps Destrée's arguments refer only to the bourgeois state? A good portion of the booklet, after all, is devoted

¹ Jules Destrée, *Art et Socialisme*, Bruxelles, 1896, p. 9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

to criticising the policies of the Belgian government in the area of culture.

But no, the author's main conclusions regarding the interrelation between art and the state are meant to have general application, and thus include the socialist state as well. In criticising the state of affairs with respect to art in bourgeois Belgium, Destrée calls on socialists to heed this lesson themselves. "We have often seen," he says, "how under a clerical regime rewards and subsidies were given to artists, not for their talents, but for their convictions. We must be on our guard against this foible."¹

In confirmation of his opinion that when "attempts are made to direct art it suffocates and dies", Destrée cites the example of the French artist and Commune Gustave Courbet, who rejected the decoration he was offered. He quotes—with sympathy, no doubt—part of Courbet's letter to the minister:

"My feelings as an artist are keenly aroused against accepting a reward at the hands of the state.

"The state is incompetent in matters of art. When it begins to grant awards it usurps the taste of the public; its interference only demoralises; it is fatal for the artist, whom it deludes with his own greatness; it is also fatal for art, which it squeezes into the confines of official decorum, which it condemns to the most sterile mediocrity. The best that the state can do is to hold itself aloof, and on that day when it gives us complete freedom it will have fulfilled one of its responsibilities towards us."²

Let us turn now to the opinions of another author who also enjoyed considerable authority among the Marxist circles of his day. We are speaking of Karl Kautsky, who published a book in 1902 called *The Social Revolution*. We will not comment on the judgments he makes in the area of economics and politics, but rather on the views he sets forth in the chapter entitled "Intellectual Production", which are deserving of attention.

Kautsky concurs that not only material production, but intellectual production as well—science, art, and so on—must be reorganised after the revolution. But precisely how should this be done? May one suppose that in this

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 10.

sphere only one path is possible and right—the replacement of capitalist enterprise by state enterprise?

This proposition brings on a cascade of rhetorical questions. "If so," Kautsky writes, "does not then the state centralisation of this extraordinarily broad and important sphere of spiritual life threaten it with the most dire consequences it could suffer—monotony and stagnation? State authority may cease to be the organ of one class, but will it not remain the organ of the majority? And can one make the spiritual life of the people dependent on the will of the majority? . . . Does not the new order threaten by the fact that the very best and most daring of progressive fighters for the spiritual development of society will constantly find themselves at odds with the proletarian regime? And even if this regime gives each individual more freedom for artistic and scientific development, will not the gains thereby made be more than cancelled out by the fetters placed on spiritual activity that is dependent on the assistance of social means?"¹

Already at this point the author's attitude toward the subject is thrust forward. The continuing discourse can leave no doubt on this count. Kautsky proceeds on the assumption that in the sphere of intellectual production the law of value is not applicable, and therefore that society is absolutely indifferent to the comparative scales of production of, say, lyrical poems or tragedies, that no failure to observe proportion, no anarchistic lack of coordination represents a threat to society. Relying on far fetched theoretical constructions of this sort in which neither the specific character of art nor ideological factors are taken into account, Kautsky comes to his main conclusion: "*Communism in material production, anarchism in intellectual production*—such is the socialist method of production toward which the supremacy of the proletariat leads by virtue of the logic of economic factors, or, in other words, toward which the social revolution leads, regardless of the wishes, intentions and theories of the proletariat."²

This approach to the task of the victorious party of the proletariat wholly reflected the spirit of the doctrines professed by the leaders of the Second International. This

¹ Karl Kautsky, *Die soziale Revolution*, Berlin, 1911, S. 106.

² Ibid., S. 109.

vulgarisation and revision of Marxism, expressed in particular in an exaggeration of the role of elemental economic laws and an underestimation, if not rejection, of the political goals of the struggle, made itself felt in the interpretation of a number of fundamental ideological, philosophical and aesthetic problems.

As early as 1899, in a book entitled *Problems of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy*, E. Bernstein categorically demanded that "science, and all production resulting from spiritual endeavour should be treated as nothing other than something outside the sphere of the party".¹ In Kautsky's *Reproduction and Development in Nature and Society* art is viewed primarily from the point of view of its ability to diversify man's sense perceptions and afford him pleasure. "The more labour productivity increases," we read in the chapter on "Art and Nature", "and the more time it gives man to produce surplus goods or to spend at leisure, the more he uses his productive capacity, not only in the production of means of consumption, but also in the production of means of pleasure which provide him with greater and more varied forms of excitement. The most primitive are alcohol and nikotine. The other, more subtle and varied means are those which do not affect one's taste or sense of smell, but rather the mind—sounds, colours, forms, sensations which are beyond the realm of the everyday."²

The problem of the *aesthetic* needs of the proletariat is interpreted in the same light. Kautsky does not deny that these needs "grow and develop" and even find a "certain expression", but the major, decisive factor, in his opinion, is that economic conditions and contemporary civilisation "kill, or rather, suppress to an ever increasing degree" aesthetic feeling in the proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie. That, suggests Kautsky, is why the proletariat is scarcely capable of creating "a new epoch in art"; the most one can count on, and that only with the passage of time, is a more intense consumption of already existing spiritual values. "...The proletarian striving for art at

¹ E. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*, Stuttgart, 1969, S. 174.

² Karl Kautsky, *Vermehrung und Entwicklung in Natur und Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart, 1910, S. 133-34.

first will by no means lead to the development of a new, higher form of art; initially the proletariat will merely broaden its participation in the enjoyment of art now monopolised by the bourgeoisie; but as it acquires greater influence the proletariat will in any case see to it that a greater portion of the productive forces at hand will be delegated to artistic creation, and more leisure time will be left over for each member of society to engage in artistic activity or avail himself of aesthetic pleasure."¹

Of course, given *such* an understanding of the cultural policies and tasks of the proletariat, given *this particular* notion of the prospects for art's development on "the day after the social revolution", the very act of posing the problem of the planned and purposeful guidance of this process proved to be out of place and the matter was simply dropped. "Anarchy" remained.

It was against this ideological and theoretical background that Lenin's famous article "Party Organisation and Party Literature" appeared in 1905. Here for the first time the Marxist view on the role and place of art in society, on the partisanship and freedom of creative activity, was formulated with utmost clarity; here the fundamental principles and foundations were laid for the scientific and purposeful direction of the artistic process, principles which to this day determine the content and form of the cultural policies of our party. This essay by Lenin, along with other works and utterances dealing with art, oppose in principle the reformist and essentially unscientific ideas of Destrée, Bernstein and Kautsky, and are a continuation and development of Marx's and Engels' views under new conditions.

Since its appearance in the autumn of 1905, "Party Organisation and Party Literature" has continued to excite polemics and keen ideological discussion. Attempts are still being made to distort the essence of this work, to interpret it from false and anti-historical positions and to impoverish its meaning in one way or another. There are those who still hold the opinion, for example, that Lenin's essay deals primarily with problems related to the intra-party strife of that period, and that the demand for parti-

¹ Karl Kautsky, *Vermehrung und Entwicklung in Natur und Gesellschaft*, S. 144.

sanship contained therein is addressed primarily to party publicists and, strictly speaking, has nothing to do with artistic activity. György Lukács advanced this thesis in his time, and Ernst Fischer and others tried to support it. The endeavour to reduce the meaning of Lenin's work to purely organisational and tactical matters actually casts doubt on the principle of partisanship in art and, naturally enough, on the party's right to exercise influence on it.

This, in the end, is also the essence of another proposition often repeated in bourgeois and revisionist criticism, namely, that the principle of partisanship, as well as the Leninist concept of culture as a whole, is related exclusively to a specific historical period and the concrete conditions prevailing in Russia at the time. Hence the conclusion that Lenin's principles ostensibly have no meaning for other periods and other conditions. The facts, however, contradict this conclusion. Thus in a work devoted to the establishment of socialist realism in Latvian literature J. Barkan convincingly demonstrates the enormous influence of Lenin's article on Marxist and democratic criticism in Latvia. The author examines the activities of a number of leading party journalists and critics (P. Stučka, J. Jansons, A. Upits, R. Pelše) and shows how "the Leninist principle of partisanship became the *basic creative conception* of progressive Latvian literature and criticism".¹ In *Lenin and Literature* V. Kolevski traces similar processes in Bulgarian literature.²

In viewing "Party Organisation and Party Literature" as the theoretical foundation of the cultural policies of our party, one should stress first and foremost two important aspects of the Leninist principles governing the party guidance of artistic activity.

First, these principles are an expression of the *objective laws of social development*. In this sense they can and must be viewed as part of the Marxist Leninist science for the management of society as a whole.

¹ See J. S. Barkan, *Leninsky printsip partiinosti i nekotorye problemy formirovaniya sotsialisticheskogo realizma v latyshskoi literature* (The Leninist Principle of Partisanship and Certain Problems Concerning the Establishment of Socialist Realism in Latvian Literature), Moscow, 1971.

² Vasil Kolevski, *Lenin i khudozhestvennata literatura* (Lenin and Literature), Sofia, 1970.

Marxism not only posed the question of the possibility of exerting a purposeful influence on social processes, revealing the dialectical interdependence between the cognition of the objectively existing laws of development and the conscious use of these laws in human practice, but irrefutably demonstrated the necessity of such influence. After the Great October Revolution in our country it became possible for the first time in history to implement this fundamental Marxist Leninist principle. The governing of society on a scientific basis and the planned, purposeful guidance of the aggregate of social processes is an objective law that operates under socialism.

Is there any reason to exclude art from this aggregate of processes? No, there is none. Art, of course, is something extraordinarily specific, but other fields of activity of the social organism also possess a highly specific character, and we do not exclude them from the sphere of action of the law of planned and proportional development. Specificity can and must determine the particular methods of exercising influence in a given field of human and social endeavour, but it by no means excludes such influence in principle.

In any case, for Lenin the specificity of creative activity merely proved that the literary concerns of the party should not be *tritely* identified with its other concerns, but this in no way prevented one from considering literature "an element of Social-Democratic Party work, inseparably bound up with the other elements".¹ Lenin viewed the merging of literature "with the movement of the really advanced and thoroughly revolutionary class"² as something whose necessity had to be realised to the fullest extent, as an urgent and indispensable demand dictated by the interests of the revolution—in other words, as an objective *law* of social development. In a conversation with Klara Zetkin Lenin characteristically used the word "chaos" (analogous, we might recall, to Kautsky's "anarchy") in describing the alternative to this law, manifesting itself in the planned guidance of art.³

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 46.

² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³ See V. I. Lenin, *On Literature and Art*, Moscow, 1970, p. 250.

There is a second, no less important consideration. The necessity of party leadership proceeds not only from our understanding of the social function of art and the demands made on it by society, but also from the conceptual and aesthetic nature of art itself. What we are confronted with is nothing other than an *objective law governing the development of artistic endeavour itself*, an indispensable prerequisite and condition of art's viability. A genuinely free literature which, in Lenin's words, enriches "the last word in the revolutionary thought of mankind with the experience and living work of the socialist proletariat",¹ is itself simultaneously impregnated by this experience and this "living work"—that is what constitutes the remarkable dialectics of the process. In his book *Marxism and Aesthetics* the well known scholar Hans Koch (GDR) comments on this subject in the following manner: "The necessity of a guiding role for the party is not a decree foisted on literature 'from without' which does not take into account the concrete conditions of artistic development and aesthetic criteria; this necessity is a wholly natural consequence of the 'inherent', 'internal' specific conditions of the literary process itself. A denial of the guiding role of the party is designed to destroy the organic ties between literature and the social environment in which it can grow, to forcibly remove literature from life, from reality."²

Thus the problem of party guidance in art is not simply a political or ideological issue, and certainly not just an organisational problem, but an *aesthetic* one as well.

One cannot help but regret that this particular aspect of the problem is not sufficiently stressed in Marxist criticism. We have a good deal to write and say—and justly so—about what the people, society and the party expect and demand from art, but we tend to ignore another aspect of the greatest importance: what does genuine Leninist party leadership *give* to art, how does it enrich it, how does it promote the realisation of all the creative possibilities of the artist? Fabrications regarding the destructiveness of the party's "vice-like grip" on artistic activity must be countered with serious studies which, on the basis of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 49.

² Hans Koch, *Marxismus und Ästhetik*, Berlin, 1961, S. 612.

concrete examples, convincingly demonstrate that the careful, wise guiding influence of the party can nurture creative growth, bringing out the best and strongest features of the artist's talent and make his creative endeavours more productive. Artistic guidance in principle conforms to the objective inner laws of art's development and is dictated by the interests of this development; if such guidance takes into account the specific nature of artistic activity, the individual features of the artist's labour, it itself becomes, as it were, an intrinsic component of the artistic process.

Thus the most important conclusion that can be drawn from the Leninist doctrine of partisanship in art, a conclusion which is of fundamental significance in establishing the principles, forms and methods of the cultural policies of our party and socialist state, amounts to the *inseparability* of the political, ideological and aesthetic aspects of the problem.

This is the idea that pervades Lenin's works and speeches on cultural matters, and the most important documents of the CPSU, which at various stages have determined the main direction of party guidance of art and literature, for example, the CC RCP(B) letter "On the Proletcult Organisations", the resolutions of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Congresses of the RCP(B), the CC RCP(B) resolution "On Party Policy in Literature", the CC CPSU(B) resolution "On the Reorganisation of Literary and Art Organisations" and others.¹ As we know, the 24th Congress of the CPSU decisively reaffirmed the permanence of the Leninist principles of party guidance in literature and art. In the Central Committee's Report to the Congress we read, "In line with the Leninist principle of partisanship, we believe that our task is to direct the development of all forms of creative art towards participation in the people's great cause of communist construction."² The document stresses the profoundly constructive char-

¹ The role of these party documents in consolidating the ideological and creative powers of writers is reviewed against the broad background of Russian Soviet literature and the literatures of other Soviet nations in the works of V. Ivanov, V. Ivashin, S. Kryzhanovsky, L. Novichenko, N. Perkin, L. Timofeyev, A. Trostyanetsky and others.

² 24th Congress of the CPSU, Moscow, 1971, p. 105.

acter of the party's cultural policies. "The strength of Party leadership," we are told, "lies in the ability to inspire the artist with enthusiasm for the lofty mission of serving the people and make him a convinced and ardent participant in the remaking of society along communist lines."¹

Cultural policies can be successful and genuinely productive only if they are based on the sum total of closely interrelated and interdependent political, ideological and aesthetic factors. The violation of this principle leads to a one sided approach, distortion and lack of proportion. For example, if the purely political aspect is underscored, to the detriment of the aesthetic aspect, we run a high risk of vulgarisation, an underestimation of the specific nature of artistic activity, and a crude utilitarian approach to art. On the other hand the absolutisation and illegitimate accentuation of the aesthetic aspect *alone*, coupled with a negligent attitude toward the political and ideological functions of art, is clearly contrary to the Leninist, class concept of literature as one of the party's concerns.

* * *

In addition to everything else, the fact that the problems of cultural policies continue to excite disputes in Marxist (or self-styled Marxist) aesthetic thought demonstrates that the questions we have touched on are by no means of a purely "academic" character. The fairly popular theory of the so called "autonomy of culture" in particular deserves some attention.

First, a typical quotation.

"We have made important gains of a fundamental nature which no one now intends to cast doubt on. One of these achievements concerns the autonomy of the sphere of culture with respect to the sphere of politics, and consequently—under the leadership of a socialist state—the rejection of party control over the free course of strivings and discussion in the field of culture."²

¹ Ibid., p. 107.

² Mario Alicata, "I comunisti e la Cultura italiana", *Rinascita*, 18 dicembre, 1965, p. 7.

In these words (the author has for many years concerned himself with problems of ideology and culture within the framework of the Italian Communist Party) we find an essential indication that the principle of autonomy, the rejection of party guidance in the field of culture, is not regarded as a temporary or tactical move, but is a matter of principle and applies under a socialist state.

There are, of course, weighty reasons for speaking of the comparative autonomy of culture (as well as other areas of spiritual concern) in the sense that its connection with politics is not a direct one, but is complex and has intermediary links. If *this* were the concept of autonomy the author had in mind, the matter would apparently not be open to dispute.

But the opinions expressed have another meaning. The author is speaking here of the *opposition* between culture and politics, the *incompatibility* of creative freedom and the principle of guidance in general, regardless of what sort of purposeful influence on the creative process is meant. This concept logically proceeds from more general propositions, namely, from "the perspective of political leadership which, in a socialist state, makes provisions for a multi-party system, the possibility for both the majority and the minority to form representative assemblies". As we see, given such an interpretation the "autonomy of culture" is only an organic part of a particular concept based on the principle of pluralism, the rejection of a "monolithic" structure.

In their attempts to find a theoretical basis for the concept of culture's autonomy, its defenders appeal to the works of Antonio Gramsci, in particular his views on the correlation between literature and politics.

In his remarks on literary criticism contained in the book *Literature and National Life* Gramsci speaks of what he considers the unresolvable conflict between the politician and the artist rooted in the fundamental differences between these two human and social types. In his opinion "the man of letters inevitably has less precise and definite perspectives than the political figure", for the artist is constantly trying to fix, to "consolidate" that which constitutes the individuality of the given moment, whereas the politician "views any movement in its coming into being"; for him the evaluation of any factor conforms to

the necessity of "setting people in motion, transporting them beyond the confines of the present day and making them capable of achieving the set goal collectively".¹ That, proposes Gramsci, is why "the politician will never be satisfied with the artist and will never be able to become one; he will always find that the artist lags behind, is anachronistic and is separated from real movement".² That is why the artist "should be less of a 'sectarian', if one may put it that way, and more of an 'opposer'".³

Hence the conclusion that any interference by politics in art, any attempt on the part of politics to exert influence on art runs contrary to the latter's nature and is fraught with the danger of deforming its nature, doing violence to creative freedom. There is only one way out—rejecting guidance and acknowledging "the autonomy of culture".

Can one say that there is no rational core whatsoever in Gramsci's opinions on the conflict between the man of letters and the politician?

Let us see what Lenin had to say about this matter. Let us examine in particular his relationship with Gorky. What general outline of Lenin's attitude to the problem of the "artist politician" can we cull from his letters and pronouncements?

At first glance his attitude seems contradictory. On the one hand Lenin often stresses that Gorky by nature is not a politician, that he should not concern himself with politics. "But why should Gorky meddle in politics?"⁴ he asks in *Letters from Afar* in commenting on the writer's confused pronouncements on war and peace, regarding them as a manifestation of petty bourgeois prejudices. (Subsequently, in a letter to I. A. Gruzdev, Gorky denied that he made such pronouncements: "It was probably something fabricated by the press abroad,"⁵ he wrote; but that is by-the-by—here we are concerned with Lenin's position.) "In Petrograd a politician can work, but you are not

¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Litteratura e Vita Nazionale*, 1966, p. 13.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 334.

⁵ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* in thirty volumes, Vol. 30, Moscow, 1955, p. 303 (in Russian).

a politician,"¹ wrote Lenin to Gorky in a letter dated July 31, 1919.

On the other hand Lenin always viewed and evaluated Gorky's works and activities from the *political* point of view, considering it impossible to make allowances for the "whims" of the artist's psychology when the matter concerned fundamental political questions.

Noteworthy in this respect is Lenin's open letter "To the Author of the 'Song of the Falcon'", after Gorky, along with other leading figures of Russian culture (F. Chaliapin, A. Vasnetsov, V. Vasnetsov, A. Serafimovich, P. Struve and others) came out with an appeal "From Writers, Artists and Actors" published in the rightist Cadet newspaper *Russkoye slovo*; this appeal, in Lenin's words, was written in a wholly "chauvinistic-clerical" spirit. Lenin recalls that at one time Gorky defended Chaliapin who had publicly gone down on his knees before the tsar, by saying that "we artists have a different mentality". "Let that be so," says Lenin, commenting on these words. "Let us say that Chaliapin must not be strictly judged. He is an artist, and nothing more. He is a stranger to the cause of the proletariat."

Characteristic here are the words "and nothing more". To Lenin's way of thinking Gorky, as opposed to Chaliapin, was *not only* an artist. It may be that Gorky himself was not always cognizant of the fact that he was also a politician, for "the workers have grown accustomed to regard Gorky as their own" and "it is this trust on the part of the class-conscious workers that imposes on Gorky a certain *duty*—to cherish his good name..."². In other words a writer like Gorky could not, in Lenin's opinion, be considered *only* an artist; willingly or unwillingly he was taking part in politics, that is, while remaining an artist, he was also functioning as a politician.

Thus it is not difficult to see that the contradiction in Lenin's position was only an apparent contradiction. At various stages, under various conditions and for various reasons Lenin stressed different aspects of the problem.

Could Lenin have ignored the specific features of the psychology and emotional make up of Gorky as an artist?

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 413.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 41, pp. 344-45.

No, of course not; it was this very understanding of these particular features that dictated Lenin's attitude of respect, attentiveness, benevolence and, if you please, patience toward Gorky; these feelings run through all his letters and pronouncements concerning the writer.

But there is another side to the question: did this approach imply that Lenin was capitulating before the whims of the artist's psyche, that he rejected political criteria in evaluating the writer's activities? For Lenin Chaliapin was "an artist, and nothing more", that is, an artist in the traditional sense; but Gorky was an artist of the *new type* whose talent was grafted to the revolution and the concerns of the proletariat. He had to be judged on different grounds, on the basis of fundamentally different criteria. Hence Lenin's extraordinarily faithful adherence to principles as far as Gorky is concerned, his uncompromising stand in fundamental questions, his exacting attitude, sometimes bordering on severity (here one need only recall the tone of the letters he wrote to Gorky on July 31 and September 15, 1919). Hence Lenin's constant striving to influence the writer, to convince him, to help him overcome his hesitations.

This too was the essence—instructive in the highest degree—of Marx's relations with certain poets, his contemporaries, who felt a strong affinity with socialism.

No one could be so sensitive to the talent of his friends, no one could understand so well and feel so strongly their poetic nature with all its contradictions and weaknesses, no one could be so tolerant of those weaknesses as Marx. "A poet, no matter what sort of man he is, needs approbation and admiration," he wrote to Joseph Weydemeyer. "I think that is a property of the species itself."¹

When Georg Herwegh married the daughter of a rich merchant and plunged into the life of the Parisian *beau monde*, playing the role, in Mehring's words, of "a young lion and a dandy",² Marx defended him before Arnold Ruge, considering at the time that Herwegh was a genius and that he had a brilliant future awaiting him. This occasioned a prolonged break between Marx and Ruge.

¹ Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Bd. 28, Berlin, 1963, S. 475.

² Franz Mehring, *Aufsätze zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, Leipzig, S. 249.

When Ferdinand Freiligrath did not rebuff the attempts of those who wanted to put him at odds with Marx, as a result of which they were estranged from each other, it was Marx who, after openly expressing his grudges to Freiligrath in a letter, nonetheless took the first step in re establishing their old friendship. When Heinrich Heine sinned against his own conscience, accepting a secret subsidy from the French government, and falsely referred to Marx's advice, the latter reacted magnanimously toward the poet, who was being accused of venality, and did not publicly refute the poet's calumny. Such was Marx's love for Heine and his belief in the poet's talent.

But at the same time no one could be so uncompromising and unbending in his relations to poet friends when political principles, the interests of the party, the revolution and the proletariat were at stake. Marx's relationship with Freiligrath was considerably clouded when the latter swerved onto the path of bourgeois liberalism and tried to divorce himself from the party. Marx could not remain silent and he wrote to the poet, expressing his views on the matter with characteristic frankness. As for Herwegh, Marx did not forgive his petty-bourgeois radicalism (incited by the provocateur Adalbert von Bornstedt and by his own penchant for adventurism, Herwegh took it into his head to make an armed march on Germany and declare a republic there), his ties with Bakunin's followers and reactionary elements in the German emigrant community; and so they parted ways.

One must note that even Mehring, mentioned above in connection with his studies on the relations between Marx and representatives of socialist literature, interpreted these relations in a one sided manner. He believed that Marx and Engels sometimes "forgot about the poet's right to speak in his own language, which in logical precision need not and cannot be equated with the language of science".¹ In a work entitled *Sozialistische Lyrik, G. Herwegh-F. Freiligrath H. Heine* he documents Marx's beneficial influence on all three poets, but his main point is the fatal *incompatibility* between their positions and those of Marx; furthermore he does not view this incom-

¹ Franz Mehring, *Äufsätze zur deutschen Literatur von Klopstock bis Weerth*, Berlin, 1961, S. 408-09.

patibility as something incidental, but something inevitable whose essence is expressed thus: "The poet and the politician are guided by different stars."¹

Marxism, of course, has never denied the presence of certain contradictions between politician and artist, the sources of which lie, according to Marxism, in the specific features of artistic activity, as well as in the social nature of the intelligentsia in general. The main point, however, is that for Marx, Engels and Lenin it was obvious not only that such contradictions were inevitable, but most important, that they were *relative*. Lenin believed that the conflict between the politician and the artist could and should be overcome—that was the reason for exercising a guiding influence on art. The dialectics of the process appears to be such that the conflict can never be completely exhausted and resolved, but at the same time it must constantly and consistently be overcome. Thus the guiding of the artistic process is not accomplished through one single act, it is not a system of measures worked out once and for all, but rather a constant development and the search for optimal resolutions.

It is another matter altogether to speak of the absolutisation of the contradictions between politician and poet, wherein the interrelations between them appear as something petrified, as something given, rather than as something involving mutual influence and reciprocal impact. For Lenin the most important (and, under certain conditions, decisive) factor in solving this problem was the creation of a new type of artist who would enter into fundamentally new relations with the party of the proletariat and with the socialist state, whereas contemporary advocates of "autonomy" view the matter as something static, ignoring the concrete historical and social aspects that surround it.

This point of view was expressed in extreme form by Mario Spinella, the Milan editor of the weekly *Rinascita*, when he proposed the creating of a special and specific organisation of revolutionary intellectuals which would exist outside the framework of the party. Spinella's suggestion was motivated by his belief in the inevitability of conflict between leading representatives of the intelligen-

¹ Ibid., S. 413.

tsia and the communist parties; the basis of this conflict, in the author's opinion, is that the intellectual cannot force himself to reject his critical orientation, to give up his free search. At present, says the author, no one knows how to prevent this orientation from turning into factionalism, how to make sure that the intellectual's strivings will not conflict at every turn with the interests of party unity. The only way out is to create a separate organisation of intellectuals which is affiliated with the party but does not enter into its ranks.

This suggestion was discussed for several months on the pages of *Rinascita* under the special rubric *Self criticism of the Intelligentsia*, and did not find much support. In discussing the relations between the intellectual and the party, the participants in the discussion naturally touched on the problem of the "autonomy of culture" as well; the most varied views were proffered, but one fact stands out: this time the discussion was not limited to a one-sided emphasis of "critical orientation". In a number of instances the participants accentuated not so much the fatal conflict between the intelligentsia and the party, between "freedom" and "guidance", as the ways and means for overcoming these conflicts and perfecting the system of party guidance. This was reflected in Bruno Schacherl's essay "From Self-criticism to Politics" which summed up the discussion; here we find in particular the sober thought that the waverings, illusions and "duality" of the intellectual referred to by Gramsci could be properly understood and evaluated if one also considered his endeavour "to become today a part of the 'collective intellectual' which the party represents", to "find his place in politics".¹

As for Gramsci's position, there is one essential point which, besides everything else, we must bear in mind. This position took shape under unique political conditions while the Italian communists were engaged in a struggle against sectarianism within the Communist Party. The sharp polemical formulation of the question of art's autonomy and Gramsci's strong stand against political pressure on art bore the imprint of the political situation, the anti dogmatic and anti-sectarian struggle. In any case

¹ *Rinascita*, No. 21, 1971, p. 32.

it appears to me that A. Lebedev, author of the introduction to the Russian edition of Gramsci, somewhat oversimplifies the issue when he asserts without reservations that the latter's views on the interrelation between art and politics are of "permanent" methodological significance.¹

Why is it so important to understand what the "autonomy of culture" means and to properly evaluate both the real content of this concept and one-sided interpretations? Because today this idea is enmeshed in an extremely complicated ideological context.

Mistaken interpretations of the role of the intelligentsia, and particularly the role of the creative intelligentsia in the modern world, have become extremely widespread. Here one can observe a broad gamut of views, a large number of movements ranging from those of an openly anti-communist nature to those of a quasi-Marxist, right opportunist and "left" revisionist sort. In all these theories it is not too difficult to make out a common, ultimately petty-bourgeois base; they are all linked by their unscientific metaphysical approach to such problems as the relationship between art and society, creative freedom, the specific features of artistic activity, and so on.

There exists a concept of artistic freedom which is based on the notion that there is no resemblance between artistic activity and other forms of social activity.² Here the artist is made to appear in the role of a sort of eccentric genius before whose enchanted gaze the surrounding world reveals itself in its primeval, pristine freshness, inaccessible to the ordinary mortal. The idea is advanced that eccentricity is inherent to one with genuine talent, who always holds himself aloof from society and at times can find no common language with the world around. Here

¹ Antonio Gramsci, *O literature i iskusstve* (On Literature and Art), Moscow, 1967, p. 3.

² This, for example, is the very idea that lies at the foundation of L. Pazhitnov's conception formulated in his speech at the Lenin-grad symposium on the sociology of art (1966). Pazhitnov cuts the artist off from social struggle, stressing that his consciousness is not social consciousness, that the artist simply "expresses his individual, personal attitude toward reality" and always evaluates the latter "from the viewpoint of the individual as a special micro-organism" (see *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 7, 1967, pp. 144-45). A. Kogan polemicalises with Pazhitnov in his book *V. I. Lenin o roli mirovozzreniya v khudozhestvennom tvorchestve* (V. I. Lenin on the Role of Weltanschauung in Artistic Creation), Kiev, 1970, pp. 161-69.

an exclusive role is assigned to works that are written, as it were, from the perspective of a child, who perceives life in its pure form, without such extraneous features as world outlook, class position, or the spiritual heritage of the people.

While rejecting this sort of infantilism with respect to the artist, this theory of the "childishness" of art, we are, of course, by no means inclined to underestimate the significance of individuality in artistic activity. We are concerned with something else: how should one interpret this specific feature of artistic labour, and what significance should be assigned to it?

Yes, as a rule the artist works by himself, in the quiet of his own room or studio (there are, of course, other forms of art in which the principle of individual activity is intimately bound up with collective activity—theatre and the cinema, for example—but that is another matter), the act of creation is by its very nature profoundly individual, and no one can do for the artist what he, and he alone, is destined to do. Hence the miraculous uniqueness of art. But this may be a source of considerable complications. This particular feature of artistic activity which, to a certain degree, transforms the artist into an "independent operator"—does it not imply the possible (though by no means inevitable!) loss of perspective, of a broad outlook and precise social proportions?

We might recall that Lenin focused his attention on this problem, taking note of such traits of the intelligentsia as a penchant for individualism and anarchy, a lack of discipline and organisation. "This," he wrote in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, "incidentally, is a feature which unfavourably distinguishes this social stratum from the proletariat; it is one of the reasons for the flabbiness and instability of the intellectual, which the proletariat so often feels; and this trait of the intelligentsia is intimately bound up with its customary mode of life, its mode of earning a livelihood, which in a great many respects approximates to the *petty bourgeois mode of existence* (working in isolation or in very small groups, etc.)."¹ One must remember, of course, that these comments concerned the intelligentsia as a stratum of capitalist society, but one

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 269.

must take into account the *nature*, the particular features of intellectual and creative labour, under all conditions.

That is the first point.

The second is this: an *acknowledgement* of the specific features of some phenomenon and the *absolutisation* of these features are two fundamentally different things. This point is wholly relevant for art.

Even if one were to accept (hypothetically!) the comparison, widespread in non-Marxist aesthetics, between the artist and Robinson Crusoe, one must recognise that Crusoe too, when he began from scratch, nonetheless had considerable life experience behind him and relied on the achievements of human thought as they existed in his day. And the artist? When he sits down at his desk he is involved in a face-to-face encounter with the blank sheet of paper and everything depends on him, on his talent and mastery, but his talent and his mastery, as well as his life experience, his view of the world, his way of evaluating people and things, his tastes, sympathies and antipathies—do not exist in a vacuum; the artist is indebted not only to himself, but also to his predecessors and contemporaries, to society, to the people.

"The soil which nurtures artistic talent," writes N. Shamota in his book *On Artistic Freedom*, "is the culture of the people, the tastes, spiritual demands and life of the artist's contemporaries. In other words, the artist is only the co-author of a magnificent creation known as the culture of the people." In the work of a genuine artist there is no conflict between the individual and the social; the dialectics of their interrelation is such that "the more the individuality of the artist stands out, the more fully he embodies the character of his times, the more actively he expresses the mood of his contemporaries—in short, the more partisan his approach. For those who are not disturbed by paradoxes, one might say that the more individual the artist, the less he belongs to himself, for the more individual he is, the more people need him".¹

One can find a unique and, if you please, fundamental (in any case sophisticated, and therefore demanding par-

¹ N. Shamota, *O svobode tvorchestva* (On Artistic Freedom), Moscow, 1966, pp. 106-07.

ticularly close attention) attempt to undergird the non-historical approach in interpreting the mission of the intelligentsia, the artist's place in society and his relations to the authorities, in Albert Camus' acceptance speech upon receiving the Nobel Prize, and also in his lecture *L'artiste et son temps*.

There is something striking in Camus' wrathful repudiation of "art for art's sake", that shameful cloak for irresponsibility, in his decisive stand for art that maintains its connection with society. "Art for fun", formalist art, art that is nursed on "pretentiousness and abstractions" is only deserving of scorn; the artist should "speak for many and about many". He should convey "everyone's joys and sufferings in everyone's language"; only such an artist "will be understood everywhere".

But what does Camus have in mind when he speaks of this world, this society with which the artist is so intimately linked? The writer couches his answer in two symbols.

The first of them is the galley. Whether the artist wants to or not, whether he realised it or not, in Camus' opinion, he is chained to the galley of our times. Yes, this galley is not paradise by a long shot; it is full of overseers and, by all accounts, is not on course. But there is no way out. The galley is on the open seas, and like all the others, the only thing the artist can do is row. In other words, he must live and create.

The second symbol is that of the arena, the arena of history, where the unequal battle between the lion and the martyr has been going on since time immemorial. For centuries the artist had been among the spectators, reacting in one way or another to the bloody tragedy he witnessed, and sometimes not reacting at all. This was always true in the past, but today, in Camus' opinion, this cannot be the case; the artist's place today is in the arena.

So, in the arena of history, in the thick of battle! But a question arises: to what end? Does the artist intend to help the martyr overcome the lion? Does he intend to incite the slaves against their overseers and try to change the galley's course?

The point is that for Camus these questions make no sense. The bloody battle being staged in the arena of history has no finale, and if the lion and the martyr were

to change places tomorrow, the very principle governing the arrangement of forces would remain the same. That is why it is always the artist's duty to take the side of the martyr, even if yesterday he was the lion sated after his bloody meal. He, the artist, is a free archer who never joins the regulars. And if the slaves in chains rebel, tie up their overseers and try to change course in the hope that the galley will carry them to their destination, is it not the artist's lot, says Camus, to continue to row, goaded on by his former comrades?

But then what sense is there in rebelling, in fighting, in changing course?

A major artist shoved onto the perilous path of anti-communism by his existentialist delusions and the logic of the ideological struggle, Camus at least did not make himself out to be an adherent of Marxist philosophy.

In contrast to him Ernst Fischer, who spent a long time in the ranks of the Austrian Communist Party, tried to substantiate his thesis regarding the fatal conflict between the powers that be and the cultural élite from the viewpoint of Marxism.

From what principles did he proceed? First, from the principle of the "deideologisation" of art; in his view art operates independent of ideology, classes and society. "As ways of *cognizing reality* poetry, music and the fine arts do not find their origin in the sphere of ideology,"¹ writes Fischer in his book *Art and Coexistence*. Second—and this point is closely related to the first—the author proceeds from the notion that the modern artist lives and works under conditions of "total" alienation, which is characteristic of all "industrial civilisation", regardless of the concrete social system. "What acts on the artist," we read, "is always the *totality* of the epoch."²

These views, which are reputed to be Marxist but in fact are simply reiterations of ideas current in bourgeois aesthetics (cf., for example, *The Writer and the Totalitarian World* by the West German literary critic Wolfgang Rothe³), are also developed by Fischer in an essay entitled "The Intellectual and the Authorities", published in the

¹ Ernst Fischer, *Kunst und Koexistenz. Beitrag zu einer modernen marxistischen Ästhetik*, Hamburg, 1966, S. 58.

² Ibid., S. 172.

³ See Wolfgang Rothe, *Schrittsteller und totalitäre Welt*, Bern und München, 1966.

Prague weekly *Literární noviny* (No. 25, 1966). Here too the intelligentsia is described as the "conscience of society", the "avant garde", the only spiritual, intellectual and creative principle opposing the inertness, dullness and conservatism of "your run of the mill biped". Recollecting that Gramsci called the intelligentsia the cement of the nation, Fischer tries to supplement this definition, believing that it does not take into account the intellectual's critical functions. He writes, "If one mixes too much obligatory ideology, clerkish diligence, bootlicking and obsequiousness into this cement, it cannot fulfil its function." Hence Fischer's "more precise" formula: the intellectual is the "critic and cement of the nation", where the critical function, as we see, emerges in the foreground. "Heretics"—that is what Fischer needs. "In our century the intellectual is called to be . . . a heretic."

The phrase "in our century" is an extremely essential and perhaps even crucial in the conception proposed. Fischer replaces the Marxist class analysis of any authority or state with his own abstract arguments about the "negative forces being concentrated in power", about politics as a "trade" practised by those who are "good for nothing else". There arises a kind of generalised image of the so-called "Realpolitik" man, that of the anti-intellectual who trembles before the laboratory of Doctor Faust where "the spirit works to destroy the chains of faith, obedience and tradition". This image is totally devoid of any social or class features; in Fischer's opinion it is the handiwork of contemporary industrial society as such with its unlimited concentration of power, and the intellectual is called upon to serve as a "spiritual counterbalance both to dogmatism and to pragmatism in all 'camps'" (the author himself puts the last word in quotes).

As applied to art this means that the contemporary artist cannot help being transformed into a "total" destroyer and negator, a constant outsider. It is in this way that Fischer interprets the relationship between the artist and the communist party. "If the socialist artist were to become nothing more than the mouthpiece of a Central Committee," we read in his essay "Art and the Ideological Superstructure", "merely a highly skilled member of an agitation and propaganda department, then the result would be not merely that he would be degraded as

an artist, but also that he would be ineffective as an agitator and propagandist. Were socialist art compelled to adapt itself to the exigencies of the current tactical situation, then the life would go out of it. Its gigantic contribution to socialist society consists, after all, in that it goes far beyond cadre reports, statistics, leading articles and resolutions, that through the medium of art problems are voiced, realities illuminated which are still unknown to many a Party Secretary."¹

Just so: the role of the artist cannot be reduced to that of an illustrator of leading essays and resolutions. Who would argue otherwise? Fischer is disputing with an imaginary opponent—quite a convenience when it comes to polemics. But what sort of solution to the problem of the interrelation between art and politics, between the artist and the party, could he himself propose? All his speeches and pronouncements on the subject leave no doubt that he envisages *only* a relationship of conflict.

Antonin Liehm, a Czechoslovak writer who emigrated and began to engage in active anti-socialist activity, judges politics and art from the same point of view. The storm raised around his book *Trois générations* by certain French and Italian journalists for a time brought the attention of the Western press to the former editor of *Literární listy*, and so Liehm had the chance to publicise his views on art and politics.

The way it turned out, he had very little new to say. "The politician and the writer," announced Liehm in an interview published in *La Quinzaine littéraire* in February 1970, "fulfil two different functions which, moreover, are antagonistic, though to a certain degree they complement each other. The artist by nature is an anarchist. He is an enemy of authority, of the establishment. . . . His morality is alien to the morality of the collective. He may be a hippie or he may live like a prince, he may be an exemplary husband or he may have twenty mistresses, but in any case he occupies an exclusive position and remains in isolation."

True, Liehm does make one curious proviso: it turns out that in the life of society there are certain moments when "culture assumes the role of politics": the intellec-

¹ *Marxism Today*, February 1964, p. 51.

tual "occupies the place abandoned by politics. The writer's every word acquires political force...". This takes place, in Liehm's words, when it is necessary "to blow up the existing state of affairs". It was not so long ago that the author of the interview himself was one of the "detonators".

During that period (the bourgeois press loves to give it the high flown title "Prague Spring"¹) a fairly large number of people willing to engage in such activity appeared in a certain sector of the Czechoslovak intelligentsia occupied with the humanities. And it all began, incidentally, with utterly trite theoretical utterances on the "incompatibility" of culture and politics, with a declaration of the right of the intelligentsia to carry out a "special", primarily critical mission, and so on.

We might cite as a typical example, say, M. Jodl's essay "Criticism" in *Literární noviny* (No. 5, 1965). The author examines, with a pretense of scholarship, the relations between literature and the age and comes to the conclusion that at all times and under all conditions conflict has been the basis of these relations; conflict, that is, is the norm, the elementary law of literature's existence. And only dogmatic criticism (besides criticism of that sort, in Jodl's system of classification, there is also annotative, synthetic and creative criticism), which takes life to be "a closed system", can make out a disfunctional aspect in this conflict. But in fact, when contradictions manifest themselves in the process of literature's development, it deviates from the "closed system" and reveals itself to be profoundly functional. Jodl expresses his regret that "we have strongly emphasised the integrational function of literature—literature as challenge, as struggle, as enthusiasm, as service", whereas the "function of revealing contradictions", the "cleansing function", the "concept of literature as witness", continue to provoke resistance and suspicion and are viewed as symptoms of disintegration.

This, in Jodl's opinion, reveals the tremendous negative influence on literature of what he calls the "principle of organisation" characteristic of contemporary society. This

¹ One wit noted, not without bitterness, that someone was trying to bring Czechoslovakia into a unique contest to determine which country could "publish the largest number of works of Robbe-Grillet per capita".

principle, writes Jodl, "is accompanied by the greater likelihood of various forms of manipulation and bureaucracy. There is a tendency to subordinate the whole subtle and complex system of human existence in society to three principles: the principle of carrying out tasks, of applying a central directive, and of manipulating...". His conclusion? It is literature which can and must stand up to this depersonalising and alienating force.

In time this theme underwent a noticeable loss of abstract and theoretical configuration and acquired a wholly political orientation in the hands of certain Czechoslovak intellectuals. This tendency manifested itself most clearly perhaps, in a number of speeches delivered at the Fourth Congress of Czechoslovak writers in June 1967.

It is true that in his speech before the congress Eduard Goldstücker, for example, still tried to maintain an academic tone and made extensive use of socialist phraseology, though in essence his arguments to the effect that the "tension" between literature and the governing party and state organs was ostensibly a natural phenomenon were designed to incite the assembled delegates. The same spirit characterised the foggy, contradictory speech delivered by Milan Jungmann, editor of *Literární noviny*.

The other speakers, however, were more open. Liehm underscored that the problem lay not in individual mistakes made in the course of implementing certain policies pertaining to culture, but in the very nature of those policies. Ladislav Vaculik was no less specific in his speech. The primary attribute of any form of authority, he declared, is that it wishes to retain its authority, which means that conflicts are inevitable between literature and the powers that be.

The next step quite naturally followed: it was pronounced openly that an indispensable condition for the successful activity of the artist was his independence of authority.

Thus the problem of art and politics as interpreted by such intellectuals became one link in an extended series of attacks on the principles of socialism and, above all, the governing role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. In an essay entitled "What Do We Mean in Concrete Terms" the same Liehm mentioned above declared: "At

the present moment the primary issue in our country is whether the Communist Party has a moral and political right to assume a governing role" (*Literární listy*, No. 16, 1968).

This was the moment when the intellectual decided to become a politician. Attacks against authority "in general" turned into attacks on "official authority", on the party and the socialist state. The intellectuals in the opposition were not averse to participating in the process of governing that very "pluralistic democratic society" which Ivan Sviták called for. Yesterday's "élite of influence", in Rudolf Černý's definition (he authored a book on the counter revolution in Czechoslovakia¹), claimed the position of the "élite of power".

Such was the evolution of the concept based on a recognition of the "special mission" of the intelligentsia, the eternal and, in the end, supposedly fruitful conflict between the artist and the authorities, between art and politics.

What happened in Czechoslovakia, of course, represents the most extreme stage of evolution, and hurried generalisations are irrelevant here, but one should not minimise the instructiveness of these dramatic lessons, all the more so because discussions of the relations between art and politics and ideology continue to this day, and in the course of such discussions certain views are expressed which are, to put it mildly, subject to dispute.

In 1971 a book was published in Zagreb entitled *Conflict in the Camp of Leftist Literature (1928 1952)* written by the Croatian critic Stanko Lasić. As noted by the organ of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the newspaper *Komunist* (March 4, 1971), the author's main conclusion is that "the relations between art and revolution are built on a fundamental antinomy, i.e., on their unresolvability as long as the revolution continues and the factor of alienation exists. Consequently it is impossible to achieve harmony and an absolute synthesis of art and revolution; they are opposed to each other".

Telling in this respect is the discussion of Ideology and Creation in connection with Lasić's book, carried on in the Yugoslav paper *Politika* (March 13 and 20,

¹ See Rudolf Černý, *Jak se dělá kontrarevoluce* (How a Counter-Revolution Is Made), Praha, 1970.

and April 3, 1971). Certain participants in the discussion actively supported and tried to develop the thesis of the antinomy between revolution, politics and ideology on the one hand, and literature on the other. For example, D. Ereimić, a critic, wrote, "Since ideology invariably strives to justify existing social practice, the artist cannot, by virtue of the whole meaning of his activities, accept ideology.... It is the artist's duty to accept only that responsibility which proceeds, not from ideological, but from other sources."

Zoran Gavrilović echoed the same idea: "Ideology is a system, whereas art represents individual creation not to be easily pinned down to general immanent principles. Ideology means constant activity or inclinations thereto, whereas art is restricted by its own specific forms, and self-satisfaction is inherent to it; ideology gravitates toward objective truth, art—to the illusion of objectivity or, in essence, anti objectivity. In the nature of its manifestation, in its imperious tendencies, ideology deprives art of its basic prerequisites, and therefore inevitably leads creativity to decadence and decline."

Once again the leitmotif of these and other pronouncements was the "total" incompatibility of the artist and authority, regardless of social conditions or class factors. We should say straightforwardly that this approach is unscientific and in essence is profoundly contrary to Marxism.

It goes without saying that in capitalist society there is always a conflict between bourgeois politics and the creative work of the progressive artist, and sometimes even without knowing it the latter proves objectively to be playing the role of a "subversive", a destroyer of foundations. But things are different in a socialist society, where the main task of the party and the state, as well as the genuine artist, is to serve the people. Here the social grounds for fundamental, insurmountable conflicts between them disappear, and the very formulation of the question of such an artist's autonomy with respect to society proves to be far fetched, assuming that one does not have in mind that relative independence of art connected with its specificity. This does not imply, of course, that the artist's relations with society and the state or organs of power are automatically idyllic. Friction and

difficulties inevitably accompany real development. But the principal and definitive law is that the party and the socialist state help the artist to keep in step with the times, creating the most beneficial conditions for his work and creative endeavours and directing his attention to the key problems in society and its further development.

The dialectics of this process is complex and multifaceted, and of course has nothing in common with "ultra left" sallies. Without going into a detailed analysis of this aspect of the problem, let us stress one thing. A suspicious and hostile attitude toward the intelligentsia is, in essence, nothing more or less than the reverse side of the liberal's flirtation with it, a blind faith in its special mission; the basis of both conceptions is the idea that the man engaged in mental or creative labour is from the outset a force alien to socialism and a potential agent of bourgeois philosophy.

Also guilty of a one-sided view of the interrelations between the artist and authority are those who stress the former's mistakes, admiring his hesitation and failures, depicting things in such a way that the artist is made to appear valuable to society *because of* these weaknesses, and not *in spite of them*.

I am totally in accord with the high opinion our critical literature has of Marietta Shaginyan's *Retracing Lenin's Steps*. The book represents a truly unique and outstanding contribution to our Leniniana. But this is what we read in the chapter "Christmas at Sorrento" where the author comments on Lenin's correspondence with Gorky.

"When one weighs every word of their letters, one begins to realise how indispensable the floundering, recalcitrant, obdurate and impressionable Gorky was to Lenin, who sharpened his thoughts on the whetstone of their friendship, of the answers coming from such a very different, utterly unaccommodating person. *The politician needed the artist*, needed him like the air he breathed, like bread, like the right leg needs the left. It was long, long ago claimed by a philosopher that in moving we keep on *falling* and that if a man's left leg were missing he would be falling to one side and if his right were missing he would be falling to the other; it is merely owing to the fact that he falls now to one side, now to the other, that he succeeds in moving ahead." Further on Shaginyan is

even more explicit: "I do think that were Gorky different, had he not erred in 1908, and in 1917 and possibly on other occasions, too, Lenin could not have conceived the deep affection he had for him, being energised, keyed and sharpened by his controversy with him."¹

Citing Shaginyan's book in their own work "Humanism and Art",² N. K. Gei and V. M. Piskunov see here an example of conscientious research on Gorky's and Lenin's relations, though they find it necessary to express some reservations about the author's "somewhat exaggerated manner". It appears to me that the author's manner is not the point here. It might apply, say, to her exceedingly sweeping description of Gorky, her use of that strange and inappropriate epithet "different" (we might recall that Lenin called Chaliapin "a stranger to the cause of the proletariat", *in contrast* to Gorky). Manner is one thing, but the essence of the question remains, and here it is extremely difficult to agree with the author.

Yes, the politician needs the artist, no doubt about it, but not in order to "sharpen" his thoughts; he needs him as a true and in many respects irreplaceable helper in the cause of the revolution and the building of socialism. Yes, the artist is not always consistent and unswerving; sometimes he is confused, sometimes he errs and deviates, and then the politician has to engage in a most difficult and exhausting battle with him and for him, but it is a necessary battle if the conflicts are to be overcome and unity achieved, if disharmony is to give way to harmony. For Shaginyan the battle is an end in itself and valuable in itself, for it is a manifestation of the "disharmony" of harmony, so to speak, the antagonistic balance between two opposing forces—the artist and the politician. The philosopher's paradox of the right and left leg is entertaining, of course, but if one were to make an absolute of it, the conclusions could be far reaching indeed. . . .

I am also in accord with those critics who, in assessing Shaginyan's book as a significant contribution to Soviet literature dealing with Lenin, nonetheless are wont to believe that her treatment of Lenin's attitude toward Gor-

¹ Marietta Shaginyan, *Retracing Lenin's Steps*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 221-22.

² See *Lenin i iskusstvo* (Lenin and Art), Moscow, 1969.

ky's mistakes "does not appear convincing". "The sincerity of a man's errors is one thing," rightly notes V. Baranov, "but the very essence of the issue wherein he errs is another. Gorky's mistakes were sometimes of a fundamental nature, and they could not have brought him closer to Lenin, as Shaginyan writes. On the contrary, these mistakes distanced Lenin from the writer, and the former had to engage in a long and difficult struggle for Gorky and against his mistakes. Lenin's art and tact in doing so represent a remarkable contribution to the cause of the party's struggle for the creative intelligentsia, a contribution of everlasting significance."¹

In any case it is a manifest oversimplification to treat Lenin's relations with Gorky as the relations between an orthodox but flexible politician and an artist whose value to the politician consisted ostensibly in his constant opposition. In the first place this interpretation does not correspond to the realities of the situation, the true history of these relations, and in the second place it in principle runs counter to Lenin's conception of the party's guiding role in art, his views on the cultural policies of the party and the socialist state.

* * *

The concept of guiding artistic activity embraces an extraordinarily broad range of questions relating to the cultural policies of the party and the state. The varied aspects of the cultural revolution, a programme for which was worked out and initially implemented under Lenin's personal guidance; the sharp ideological struggle taking place in the creative milieu of the first years after the revolution and the activities of the party in consolidating all the healthy forces of the creative intelligentsia; the role and significance of various party documents (the decisions of congresses, the resolutions and decrees of the party Central Committee, etc.); the functions of party organs, state cultural establishments and artists' organisations; forms and methods of ideological training among members of the creative intelligentsia and their change in line with concrete historical conditions; the

¹ Vadim Baranov, "Vernost teme" (Dealing Truthfully with the Theme), *Pravda*, March 22, 1971.

role of literary and art criticism—it would be difficult to list, let alone to examine in detail all aspects of the topic.

Each of these aspects is important in its own way and deserves special attention; moreover each is intimately related with the others, forming a single complex of problems, and in singling out any one aspect a certain degree of tentativeness is bound to make itself felt. Nonetheless one has to single out certain aspects, and in this case we will dwell on two matters. The first is *the attitude toward non realist trends of various sorts*, and the second is *the effectiveness of party guidance* of artistic activity.

The topicality of the first issue is self evident. Before our very eyes attempts are constantly being made to rehabilitate—both ideologically and aesthetically—all conceivable forms of decadence and to integrate it with realism. A broad anti-realistic front is being formed in contemporary aesthetics—from an outright defence of the most extreme forms of avant garde art to “quiet” modernism (if one can permit the expression) which is not averse to “enriching” realism with its own artistic means. And strange as it may seem, Lenin is cited in defence of this position.

It isn't very easy, of course, to make Lenin out to be an adherent of decadent art—he was too clear and unambiguous in expressing his attitude toward avant-garde “innovations”. Lenin's comments, reported by Klara Zetkin, are well known and often cited in this connection: “Why turn our backs on what is truly beautiful, abandon it as the point of departure for further development solely because it is ‘old’? Nonsense! Bosh and nonsense! Here much is pure hypocrisy and of course unconscious deference to the art fashions ruling the West. We are good revolutionaries but somehow we feel obliged to prove that we are also ‘up to the mark in modern culture’. I however make bold to declare myself a ‘barbarian’. It is beyond me to consider the products of expressionism, futurism, cubism or other ‘isms’ the highest manifestation of artistic genius. I do not understand them. I experience no joy from them.”¹

¹ V. I. Lenin, *On Literature and Art*, p. 250.

Nothing could be clearer. But no, the defenders of modernism try to find a loophole here as well. They twist things about in such a way that these judgments are made to look like purely personal, subjective expressions of taste which in no way reflected on Lenin's position as a party and state leader. They conclude on this basis that Lenin reacted tolerantly to all forms of pseudo-innovative, decadent trends in art. Characteristic in this respect are comments like the ones above made by Roger Garaudy in his book *For a French Model of Socialism*.

Sometimes similar motifs can be found in our critical literature. In his book of sketches and memoirs called *So It Was* O. Litovsky claims, for example, that Lenin's policies regarding art were "liberal in the best sense of the word". One cannot but agree with A. Kogan when he recalls in his polemics with Litovsky that Lenin held all forms of liberalism in the profoundest contempt and that the concept itself is incompatible with Leninism.¹

Kogan is also convincing when he disputes V. Kardin's attempts to prove that Lenin took a definite stand "in all matters concerning the party line", but that sometimes "he did not even express his opinion lest it be taken as a 'directive'".² But "how could he be resolute in matters touching on the party line in art, and at the same time take care not to express his opinion about art?"³ asks Kogan. In reality there is a fundamental difference between the refusal to take administrative measures in influencing the course of art, between thoughtful and careful judgments, and liberal non interference, which was absolutely uncharacteristic of Lenin.

It is true that Lenin was an extraordinarily modest man, and as such he often expressed reservations about his competence in matters of aesthetics (consider, for example, his speech delivered to a meeting of the Communist group at the All-Russia Congress of Metalworkers on

¹ A. Kogan, *V. I. Lenin pro rol svitogliadu v kludozhnii tvorchosti* (V. I. Lenin on the Role of *Weltanschauung* in Artistic Creation), Kiev, 1970, pp. 254-55. We should note in all fairness that in certain subsequent pronouncements Litovsky corrected his stance.

² V. Kardin, *Dostoinstvo iskusstva* (The Merit of Art), Moscow, 1967, p. 116.

³ A. Kogan, *op cit.*, p. 259.

March 6, 1923¹). But one should hardly interpret such pronouncements too literally.

In general the supposition that there is some strict border, some watershed between a man's subjective aesthetic views and his practical activities either is based on childish conceptions or is dictated by other considerations. And here it would be appropriate to quote A. V. Lunacharsky, who said in his article "Lenin and Literary Criticism", "When it came to concrete artistic matters or questions of taste Lenin was extremely modest. Any judgment was usually accompanied by the words, 'I'm not at all a specialist,' or 'That is my personal opinion; I could easily be mistaken.' But at the same time I must emphasise that I had the greatest confidence in Vladimir Ilyich's taste, and I believe that in those areas where he expressed himself with such extreme caution and modesty, he . . . was invariably right in his judgments."²

That is one side of the question. There is another, which perhaps is the most important. Lenin's negative attitude toward pseudo innovation in the arts, toward decadence, was by no means *only* an expression of his subjective aesthetic likes and dislikes, but above all the position he held in principle. "These thoughts of Lenin," notes the Bulgarian critic Pencho Danchev in quoting Lenin's well-known pronouncements on various "isms" in art, "should not be treated merely as manifestations of his personal tastes. They demonstrate an attitude behind which are profound fundamental motives and grounds, which in turn are based on Lenin's revolutionary realist aesthetics."³

Thus what we are speaking of is Lenin's profound conviction that decadent art cannot fulfil a positive social function and cannot serve the people. It is this conviction which explains Lenin's resoluteness, uncompromising firmness and at times even harshness in dealing with a number of practical problems concerning modernist trends in the new Soviet art.

Lenin's modesty and tactfulness, his references to his own "lack of competence", and so on did not prevent him,

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 223.

² A. V. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works* in eight volumes, Vol. 8, Moscow, 1967, p. 456 (in Russian).

³ Pencho Danchev, *Kritika i estetika* (Criticism and Aesthetics), Sofia, 1970, p. 192.

for example, from waging an uncompromising struggle against futurism (as he wrote in a note to M. N. Pokrovsky: "...I request you to help us fight futurism, etc."¹). And in this struggle Lenin did not hesitate to resort to the most decisive measures. In the same note to Pokrovsky, in connection with the publication of Mayakovsky's narrative poem *150,000,000* (the 5,000 copy edition was large for those times) he wrote, "Can't we stop this? It must be stopped. Let's agree that these futurists are to be published not more than twice a year and *not more than 1,500 copies*."² And he asked Pokrovsky to find "reliable *anti-futurists*", i.e., artists who, in contrast to the futurists, were deserving of party and state support. Lenin even proposed "flogging" Lunacharsky for supporting the futurists "directly and *indirectly*" and for "driving out" the realists.

Strong words, these—"fight", "stop", and even "flog". A far cry from what, say, Vittorio Strada suggests in his essay, "Lenin's Polemics with the Proletcult Ideologists", (*Rinascita*, April 3, 1970) where for the nth time we are told of Lenin's tolerance toward the futurists.

I have already expressed my views regarding the contents of his essay (see the magazine *Moskva*, No. 8, 1970). Strada reacted in a piece published in *Rinascita* (Sept. 18, 1970), and his words and manner preclude the possibility of discussing the matter in a serious and scholarly fashion. Therefore I will limit myself to a brief commentary, and then only to the extent that the topic at hand demands.

This time around Strada does finally admit that futurism was not to Lenin's liking; to refrain from mentioning it would demonstrate too graphically his bent for skipping over historical facts. But having made this concession, the critic tries to twist it in his own favour as well; Lenin's rejection of futurist art, he says, was a matter of personal taste and had absolutely nothing to do with his activities as a politician, as the leader of the party and the state. And in general, if we are to believe Strada, Lenin believed that his main task was to "render unto art what pertains to art, and to the state (while it still exists) what pertains to the state". And that, ostensibly, is the reason he "did

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, p. 139.

² *Ibid.*

not come out against the 'nihilism' of the futurists . . . but resolutely barred the way for the nihilism and cultural-utopian tendencies" of the Proletcultists.

What a strange and absolutely groundless contrast! The Proletcult is accused not only of "broad and fruitless 'visioneering'", not only of nihilism, but also of bringing art and politics together, which for Strada is fraught with the danger of transforming reality into "a black bureaucratic night"; the futurists, on the other hand, are made to appear as the embodiment of genuine art, and their nihilism more akin to "nihilism in word rather than deed".¹

Lenin's negative attitude toward the Proletcult and his attacks on Bogdanov's and Pletnev's vulgar ideas are very well known. But futurism was not the alternative Lenin had in mind (facts and documents demonstrate that he waged a resolute struggle against it); and of course he did not seek a solution in the separation of art from politics, the state and the party, but rather in the enlistment of art in the struggle of the working class.

We must constantly bear this fact in mind when we encounter persistent attempts of this sort to find a point of contact between Marxist-Leninist aesthetics and the aesthetics of modernism, to reconcile these socially and ideologically disparate phenomena.

Attempts of this sort assume numerous forms and directions. Roger Garaudy, for example, proceeds from the viewpoint that *all* art is realistic for it is connected with reality in one way or another. And therefore he rejects the very concept of decadence. In one of his essays (see *Cahiers du communisme*, No. 5-6, 1966) he expresses the opinion that the interpretation of decadence widely accepted in Marxist criticism "is a particular instance of a

¹ The Proletcult leaders did, in fact, try to achieve full autonomy from the party and the socialist state for their organisation, and they strongly resisted attempts to implement Lenin's project for putting them under the control of the People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros). One might say that they in essence made claims to autocratic power in the cultural sphere. The point, however, is that the futurists' leaders also entertained such ambitions. They too made outright claims to exclusive leadership. Not without reason did they call one of their programmatic essays "Futurism—the Art of the State" (published in the journal *Iskusstvo kommuny*, No. 4, 1918).

more general mistake, a mistake which consists in the fact that art is viewed only as an ideological superstructure and a simple reflection of a reality which takes shape completely outside art"; this "mechanical conception of reflection is no less fatal for art than it is for science", asserts Garaudy.

Garaudy's ideas as applied to concrete phenomena of the artistic process are most fully elaborated in his book *On Realism Without Bounds*. In an afterword to the book the author gives us the essence of his idea in the following words: "What can we do if the works of Kafka, Saint-John Perse or Picasso do not correspond to these criteria [he has in mind the criteria of classical realism, i.e., Stendhal, Balzac, Tolstoy, Repin, Gorky, Mayakovsky and others-Y.B.]? Must they be excluded from realism, and therefore from art? Or, on the contrary, should we open up and extend our definition of realism and, in the light of these works, which are characteristic for our age, to discern new dimensions which will permit us to integrate this new contribution with the heritage of the past? We resolutely take the second path."¹

Having set out on this path, Garaudy first of all rejects the principle of the reflection of reality as the determining feature of realistic art. Ideas of a completely different order now come to the fore: "a realisation . . . of man's participation in the continuing creation of man"; imitating the "activeness" of the real; participation in "the act of creating the world"; the search for its "inner rhythm", and so on. No wonder that in his review of Garaudy's book Ernst Fischer discerned a "break with the theory of reflection", which, in his view, was of "decisive importance for the development and prospects of art".² Fischer had every reason to make this, frankly speaking, dubious comment.

As for Fischer himself, he views decadence from a point of view we are already familiar with—alienation and totalitarianism. For him decadence is the only art form truly suitable for our times. "If the absurd so vehemently asserts itself in the art of our century," he writes in *Art*

¹ Roger Garaudy, *D'un réalisme sans rivages*, Paris, 1963, p. 243-44.

² Ernst Fischer, "Realismus ohne Ufer", *Weg und Ziel*, N 11, 1963, S. 736.

and Coexistence, "it means that the world has become unhinged and all sense has become questionable." And further on: "Not only the grotesque, the abnormal and the loathsome, but also all categories of the forbidden—the depraved, the deformed, the pathological—are things which... the new realism considers worthy of depiction."¹

We must admit that in dealing with the nature of decadence and its place in modern art our aestheticians also express views at times which are, to say the least, questionable.

One of these points of view can be reduced to the following. In the opinion of certain authors the art which we usually regard as decadent is not decadent at all. Really decadent art is the sort which, while pretending to be realistic and optimistic, adorns and embellishes the rotting capitalist system, if not to perpetuate it indefinitely, then at least to prolong its existence. "Our enemy in art," writes one of those who support this conception, "is certainly not Kafka or others who display similar tendencies which have been vindicated in their art, but *above all* [italics mine.—Y.B.] various forms of pseudo-realism and naturalism which, in contrast to Kafka, try to preserve fidelity in details and affirm falsehood in general."²

No doubt of it, bourgeois pseudo-realism, false naturalism and mass culture really are our enemies. But a question arises: why should we not set *genuinely* realistic, *genuinely* truthful rather than decadent art in opposition to this pseudo-realistic art? Would it not be more accurate to say that both decadent art and the sort that embellishes are in essence two sides of the same coin, two hypostases of one phenomenon—the crisis of bourgeois consciousness in the artistic sphere?

Speaking of the imaginary difference between "god-seeking" and "god-building" in a letter to Gorky, Lenin noted with malicious irony that both tendencies differ "no more than a yellow devil differs from a blue devil".³ Would it not be relevant to recall these words here?

¹ Ernst Fischer, *Kunst und Koexistenz*, S. 131, 166.

² G. Kunitsyn, "Klassovost v literature. Statya vtoraya" (Class Character in Literature. Second Essay), *Znamya*, No. 2, 1968, p. 217.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 121.

The view of decadence cited above is usually defended on the grounds that decadent art, while not being "consciously socialist", nonetheless emerges from a rejection of capitalism, from a tragic, though perhaps subjective pessimistic sense of its inevitable destruction. It is in this particular respect that the supporters of decadent art see its objective, potentially revolutionary force. "In this very rejection," we read in one dissertation abstract, "we find the potential seed of historical optimism, for *before one accepts the socialist position one must understand that capitalism is doomed.*"¹

I do not think that one could acknowledge this as a convincing argument. The rejection of capitalism which is brought about by a tragic recognition of its hopelessness is, as a rule, incapable of nurturing wholesome art; more often it results in the rejection of human civilisation as a whole, in that sort of all-encompassing scepticism which consumes the artist's creative powers. Historical optimism is not born of petty-bourgeois individualistic rebellion or of a lack of faith in the revolutionary potential and creative powers of the masses.

One of the most typical and most complex writers in this respect is Kafka, whose work, not without reason, has provoked most intense discussion in recent years. It would be worth-while to look into this matter in greater detail here.

Garaudy not only includes Kafka without reservation in the sphere of "realism without bounds" (which is no cause for surprise when one considers that this "realism" is "without bounds" precisely in order to encompass *everything*); he also views the works of this author as a fundamental argument in favour of his conception. In his opinion the main reason for regarding Kafka as a realist is the fact that he shows us the world of alienation and conveys an atmosphere of "anxiety and impending catastrophe".

One has to acknowledge, of course, that Kafka "does not see the immanent movement, in the course of which the transition is accomplished from one world to another",

¹ G. I. Kunitsyn, *Puti i formy vozdetsviya politiki na razvitiye khudozhestvennoi literatury* (Forms and Ways in Which Politics Influences the Development of Literature), Moscow, 1968, p. 18.

that he "does not answer (or claim to answer) our questions". But for Garaudy it is enough that the writer "forces us to pose" these questions. In Kafka's ability to recreate the inhuman world of alienation, a world that on the surface of things is quite ordinary, a smooth-running machine, but at the same time is phantasmagoric, mysterious and hostile to man—in this ability, Garaudy believes, one can discern some sort of primordial impulse, the incentive to search for a way out. "In describing reality as it is, without any superfluous additions, that is, as a well-oiled machine, but one which constantly implies a threat, which oppresses and stifles man, which engenders panic and irony and rebellion in the mind and heart, Kafka suggests by virtue of this description alone the idea and demands of another world. . . ."

And we already feel, asserts the critic, that "this world is not tightly closed", that we are "awakened from the torpor of these habits, obligations and conventions; and are called to give an account"; "we desire to find some justification for our acts. . ."¹. In an atmosphere of all-consuming negation, at first imperceptibly, then little by little, a feeling of horror spontaneously arises, followed by irony, and later by the seeds of rebellion. This, indeed, is what constitutes the "mission of arousing" which Kafka ostensibly took upon himself.

But is this really the case? Is it true in fact that the *depiction* of alienation almost automatically gives rise to an *awareness* of this alienation? And is it true that Kafka shows us "the light at the end of the interminable tunnel"?

The response of Marxist criticism is not excessively blunt, but it is nonetheless negative. Say what you will, the constant effort to find some revolutionary principle in Kafka's negation, the attempts to discern prophetic utterances connected with the rise of the Third Reich and the inception of the "atomic age", bear the clear imprint of oversimplification, if not pure speculation. It is true, as Evgenia Knipovich rightly notes, that "the feelings of 'alienation', 'guilt' and 'fear' which characterise the attitude of Kafka and his autobiographical heroes to the world

¹ Roger Garaudy, *D'un réalisme sans rivages*, Paris, 1963, pp. 235, 236-37, 238.

are based on certain social laws",¹ but for the writer the essence of these laws remained a sealed book. Subjectively, it is true, Kafka was anti-bourgeois, and he, together with other writers akin in spirit and method, impressively conveyed the feeling that their society was doomed, that its decline and fall were inevitable, their fear before the impending cataclysms; but for them this was equivalent to the end of the world, the destruction of human civilisation and mankind in general. Hence their "apocalyptic mood", their "pessimism and lack of faith in man's creative potential, his ability to tear the chains of slavery asunder and free himself from those forces which hold him captive".² To ascribe the "mission of arousing" to art which is permeated with decadent attitudes and to see in it the seed of historical optimism is little more than wishful thinking, though undoubtedly a thoughtful, differentiated approach is imperative here.

One can find interesting thoughts on this problem in *Reflection and Action*, a book by the German (GDR) aesthetician and critic Horst Redeker. He analyses the views of those who consider Kafka a realist because in some way or another reality is reflected in his works, and above all the alienation of the individual in bourgeois society (Garaudy, Fischer, Enzensberger), and shows how unconvincing their arguments are. The fact that the characteristic historical state of the individual in society becomes the subject of literary works does not mean that these works are realistic. Redeker says, "The reflection of alienation in and of itself is a manifestation neither of decadence nor of realism; it may be realistic, as, for example, in the works of Thomas Mann and others, or it may be decadent, as it is for Joyce or Beckett." The deciding factor is not what is being reflected, but rather the artist's attitude toward it, his position and perspective on the subject. Redeker underscores that realism declines and decadence begins when alienation is represented from the position of an individual who is himself alienated. "An awareness of one's loneliness, the feeling that one

¹ E. Knipovich, *Khudozhnik i istoriya* (The Artist and History), Moscow, 1968, pp. 414-15.

² Boris Suchkov, *Liki vremeni. F. Kafka, S. Tsveig, G. Fallada, L. Feikhtvanger, T. Mann* (Images of the Age: F. Kafka, S. Zweig, H. Fallada, L. Feuchtwanger, T. Mann), Moscow, 1969, p. 21.

does not fit in anywhere, the impossibility of loving or being loved and of feeling like a member of human society –these are the basic emotions which many contemporary bourgeois authors claim to feel.”

For Kafka these feelings are manifested in the extreme. “The conveyer-belt of life carries man along toward an unknown destination. Man is more like a thing, an object, than a living being.” That is how Kafka felt in his world, and that is how he felt in his art—like a thing, an object, a victim, a little splinter tossed about in the turbulent sea of life and society.¹

Alienation depicted in this way possesses particular authenticity and force, and this depiction, says Leo Kofler (as quoted by Redeker), “is often successful to such an astonishing degree that some literary critics are overpowered by the vivid sketch of the alienated individual and falsely attribute a critical, denunciatory function to this art”.

True, in expressing the view that the artist who “assumes the guilt of his age is transformed, not only into a victim, but also into a participant”, Redeker is being a little too categorical, in my opinion. He himself engages in polemics (and convincingly so) with Geörgy Lukács, who was inclined to view expressionism merely as an ideological defence of capitalism. A simplistic approach of this sort is just as inapplicable in dealing with complex phenomena like Kafka. But when the author of *Reflection and Action* says that “Kafka depicted alienation on the basis of his own alienated position”, and that the school to which Kafka belongs “is not in the realist line”, we would be hard-put to argue with him.

We are not dealing only with Kafka here. We are speaking of *decadence as a phenomenon*. It is a complex and contradictory phenomenon with many transitional forms and opposing tendencies; it cannot be schematised simply along an “either-or” axis. But by its very nature this phenomenon is alien to realism and to a revolutionary world view, and we must bear this in mind particularly when we

¹ In his book *Mera istiny* (The Yardstick of Truth) (Moscow, 1971, pp. 35-36) Yuri Kuzmenko draws an interesting comparison between sentiments of this sort in Kafka (with reference to his diaries and his “Letter to My Father”) and Tatyana’s “decadent disposition” in Gorky’s *The Petty Bourgeois*.

are evaluating literary non-conformism in imperialist countries. The fact that Ionesco complains about the demise of freedom in the world around him, that Hitler's forces forbid avant garde art, that in clerical fascist Spain José Ortega y Gasset is part of the opposition, is no guarantee that these artists and movements are revolutionary. Redeker is right in noting that the characteristic trait of all non-conformism (and this is quite true for decadent art as well) is that it is "opposed to any form of involvement or responsibility and is directed against the state as such, whether bourgeois or socialist. . ."¹

Even when such a non-conformist artist proceeds on the basis of subjective anti bourgeois intentions, this does not at all mean that he is shaking the foundations of bourgeois society and that the pillars of this society, those who control the purse-strings, tremble in fear before him. A. V. Kukarkin, a leading specialist on contemporary Western art, analyses the essence of this phenomenon in the following fashion: "A rejection of the cognitive-analytic possibilities of the artistic image is, in general, of inestimably greater significance than a critical subtext, assuming that it even exists in a work, especially when one realises that such 'criticism' is socially abstracted and most often is permeated with a decadent feeling of the meaninglessness of existence and the incomprehensibility of the real world."²

But it also happens that literary non conformism becomes frankly anti revolutionary and comes openly to the defence of the bourgeois way of life. A clear example is an interview with Ionesco published in the French weekly *Express* in October 1970. Foggy utterances which have long since become banalities on the "malaise of existence" and "man's isolation from his transcendental roots", and no less banal attacks on realism ("Reality is not real"), man ("That derisible creation . . . is out of place in the universe") and society ("There is no good society") are quite compatible with the most commonplace apology for the foundations of bourgeois law and order and hatred

¹ Horst Redeker, *Abbildung und Aktion. Versuch über die Dialektik des Realismus*, Halle, 1966, S. 133, 152, 156, 148, 151-52, 154, 145, 146.

² A. V. Kukarkin, *Burzhuznoye obshchestvo i kultura* (Bourgeois Society and Culture), Moscow, 1970, p. 79.

toward the revolutionary forces operating in society. "We must rid ourselves of the myth of revolution"; "revolution is only an obsession and a waste of time". Assuming the role of a fighter against *la rhinocérisme* and *la moutonnisme*, Ionesco sees a solution, not in the search for ways to reorganise society along revolutionary lines, but rather in the perfection of the old society in the spirit of Raymond Aron's technocratic ideas. A regretful evolution, but really not all that unexpected.

But still there are those who support the myth of the anti-bourgeois nature of decadence, that almost revolutionary principle which supposedly underlies its characteristic rejection of alienation, and its destructive spirit.

"For us . . . it is important to encourage and take advantage of every act of resistance to the bourgeois world and every artistic phenomenon which reveals its flaws," writes the Bulgarian critic Ch. Dobrev in his essay "Revolution, Class Consciousness and Partisanship in Literature", published in the journal *Septemvri* (Nos. 2 and 3) in 1970. This position, in and of itself unobjectionable, is treated by the author in such a way that the widest range of modernist phenomena are enlisted in the ranks of "our present or potential allies". The primary criterion is the "exposé" factor, a work's opposition to "any manifestation of regress, regardless of whether it has been occasioned by international reaction, the petty-bourgeois environment or bureaucratic thick headedness".

The participants of the subsequent discussion which appeared on the pages of the Bulgarian newspapers *Narodna kultura* and *Rabotnichesko delo* (A. Atanasov and B. Tsenkov) noted the fluidity and imprecision of the criteria employed in choosing allies. They considered Dobrev's position vulnerable above all because in striving to "broaden the zone of realism" (in the course of the discussion I. Tsvetkov, who supported Dobrev, made use of this term) on behalf of modernist art, he reduced the essence of the latter to one factor—its anti-bourgeois character. In an essay entitled "Thoughts on an Approach to Modernism" Atanasov quite rightly declares that not all criticism of modernism is dogmatic criticism, and he insists on the necessity of distinguishing three different approaches to modernism: "The approach . . . of the genuine dogmatic sectarian, for whom modernism (including the work of

talented and honourable artists) is equivalent to decay, anti-humanism or simply stupidity; the approach of the eclectic objectivist, who formally acknowledges the reactionary character of modernism, but tries to arrive at such a precise understanding of the phenomenon that he fails to criticise it; and finally, the genuine Leninist approach to modernism."

As to whether there is a spontaneous "hidden" revolutionary tendency inherent in modernist art, we might do well to consider V. Khristov's views on this matter as expressed in his essay "Modernism: Its Contradictions and Our Position" (in the course of the above-mentioned discussion certain other views of his were debated). "The elementary truth of Marxism-Leninism is that any 'revolutionary spirit' which does not express the social needs of the working class and does not take into account the laws of historical development, today is not only doomed to failure, but can turn against the genuine motivating forces of revolution in contemporary society. . . . It is indisputable that modernism, which represents an anarchistic rebellion on the petty-bourgeois background, must be regarded as a manifestation of this sort of 'revolutionary spirit'."

Speaking at the Second National Conference of the Union of Bulgarian Writers in 1970, G. Dzhagarov joined in the discussion on realism and modernism, as it were, stressing that not all criticism of capitalism can be regarded as a demonstration that the critic is an ally. "There are writers who criticise capitalism the way worms criticise a decomposing corpse. Born of decay, they themselves become agents of decay." Dzhagarov believes it is imperative to make a fundamental distinction between modernists and realists. The latter criticise bourgeois society from a position of faith in man, in the people, from a position of hope; the former, "like Beckett and certain other laureates of the Nobel Prize, criticise it from a position reflecting lack of faith in man and in progress; they claim that evil is inherent to man's very nature, and therefore that it is absurd to search for a solution, that it is senseless to fight for the eradication of the social roots of this evil and to raise the banner of revolution".¹

¹ *Literaturen front*, December 3, 1970.

Debunking the imaginary "revolutionary spirit" of decadence is a long-standing tradition in Marxist criticism. Consider only one example, V. Vorovsky's essay "On the Bourgeois Character of the Modernists", published in 1908, which contains a surprisingly exact description of the decadent intelligentsia and mercilessly unmasks their claim to be "innovators, fighters for the future, pioneers of freedom and revolutionaries". These petty-bourgeois, declassé intellectuals "... hate the consuming, grasping bourgeoisie; in their hatred they are quite willing to make eyes at the proletariat and use it to frighten the bourgeoisie. But they are utterly removed from the aspirations of the proletariat; they do not believe in them, moreover they are in essence (though not always consciously so) hostile toward them. Their 'idea' is not the destruction of the bourgeois world; they wish to win it over for themselves, to fix up a cozy little place for themselves...." "No, dear modernists," Vorovsky emphatically concludes, "your newest literature is the real fruit of bourgeois society, its rotten fruit, engendered by it and required by it for its own self-satisfaction".¹

In his essay "Modernism as a Manifestation of Bourgeois Ideology"² M. Lifschitz discusses the nature and social function of the "revolutionary character" of decadent art in modern bourgeois society. Of particularly great importance for the theme under discussion is the idea that the imaginary revolutionary character of modernist art, its animosity toward the healthy, spontaneously realistic (granted, not always sufficiently developed) tastes and aspirations of the people objectively hands over the strongest trump card to the most conservative, most reactionary forces, who speculate with the greatest ingenuity on society's anti-decadent frame of mind, doing all in their power to identify the banner of the communist revolution with the negativistic revolt of the modernists. The "anti-bourgeois" stand of the decadents in reality becomes a stand against the people. It is not difficult to see why reactionaries willingly lend financial support to decadent movements of every stripe—the presence of

¹ V. Vorovsky, *Literaturno kriticheskiye statyi* (Critical Essays), Moscow, 1956, pp. 175, 178, 179.

² *Kommunist*, No. 16, 1969.

such a pseudo-revolutionary irritant makes it easier to wage battle against genuinely revolutionary principles and to win over the hearts and minds of the art-consuming public.

One might get the impression that all these problems and arguments are only of an academic nature and have no real connection with politics or ideology, with guidance of art, and especially the practical side of cultural policies. But that is not at all the case.

The notion that decadent, avant-garde art is interesting and valuable if only because in expressing the crisis of bourgeois society it makes us aware of certain aspects of reality and, in an oblique fashion, aids in its revolutionary transformation; and that the avant garde, despite its extremes, does at least enrich the arsenal of art's artistic means—these ideas, which are currently being espoused by certain Marxist critics, are fraught with the danger of serious concessions and compromises.

Here is one typical example.

In recent years the neo avant-garde "Group-63" has made itself clearly visible on the Italian aesthetic horizon. The most typical features of its platform are a rejection of the communicative function of art, a rejection of the principle of involvement, and most important, a rejection of ideology.

The "deideologisation" of art in particular has become the corner-stone of the philosophy espoused by Angelo Guglielmi, a leading theoretician of the neo-avant-garde. He emphatically denies the possibility of any connection whatsoever between artistic and ideological factors, between literature and politics.

Italian Marxist critics have often reproached the neo-avant garde, especially in connection with the principle of the deideologisation of art. But in a number of instances their pronouncements have revealed a certain ambiguity and inconsistency, an attempt to find in whatever way a rational kernel in the theoretical constructions of the neo-avant-garde and in its artistic practice.

The critics are particularly insistent in stressing that the neo avant-garde calls neo-capitalism into question and, in a way, represents its "unhappy consciousness". This is what explains the neo-avant-garde's penchant for depicting chaos. This is what gives meaning to the fracturing of

language so typical for the neo-avant-garde. A revolutionary role or at least a protest function is assigned to its experiments with language and its intentional distortion of meaning.

Followers of the neo-avant-garde movement, however, ascribe completely different meaning to their linguistic experiments; for them this is primarily a way to keep ideology at a distance and to submerge themselves entirely in their linguistic element.¹

These are the tendencies that the well-known Italian communist artist Renato Guttuso had in mind when, several years ago, he sharply criticised Rossana Rossanda, who headed the cultural section of the Italian Communist Party's Central Committee at the time (later she was expelled from the party for her schismatic activities); "if we reject a concrete ideological core," Guttuso stresses, "we may find ourselves lagging behind not even revolutionary culture, but the 'avant-garde' itself, with all its various ideological positions, including those which proceed from a repudiation of ideology altogether."²

But not all neo-avant-gardists accept the deideologisation suggested by Guglielmi. For example Edoardo Sanguineti, a poet and scholar, a leader of the neo-avant-garde and at the same time a very enterprising figure in the publishing world, argues against Guglielmi and comes out in favour of the ideologisation of the avant-garde, insisting on the direct political significance of culture.

A straightforward formula of this sort, of course, can put one on one's guard, but still, a fact is a fact: here is an outright acknowledgement of the connection between art and ideology, between art and politics. It would seem unnecessary to posit a still more weighty argument in

¹ The reader will find a thorough review of these questions in G. Breitburd's "Italyanski novy avangard" (The New Italian Avant-garde) (*Novy mir*, No. 3, 1967) and "Belaya polosа v pustynie" (A White Belt in the Wilderness) (*Novy mir*, No. 2, 1971). A large segment of the Italian press, representing various political viewpoints, gave these essays extensive coverage. Certain authors writing for *L'Unita* (M. Rago) and the weekly *Rinascita* (Spinella, Ferretti, Siciliano), while acknowledging that Breitburd was right in many respects, found him to be one-sided and accused him of underestimating the useful role of the neo-avant-garde and "Group-63" in particular.

² *Rinascita*, December 1965.

favour of the revolutionary character of the avant-garde, its convergence with Marxism. Especially in view of the fact that Sanguineti himself forthrightly declares that he is a Marxist.

It turns out, however, that this Marxism of Sanguineti is of a special brand. In an interview published in March 1968 Sanguineti not only had some vague comments to make on the "dialectical identity" of politics and culture, but also declared his devotion to, of all things, Maoism. "Let me make one thing perfectly clear," he said in response to the correspondent's guarded question regarding his sympathy for "Chinese" positions. "I believe now, as in the past, that Maoism represents the culmination of Marxist thought." In his opinion it is now imperative "to re-examine in depth the conditions and opportunities of the West, not only in light of European Marxism and Leninism, but also in light of its future Asiatic development".¹

What an unexpected switch! But is it really?

No, in essence there is nothing to be surprised at. What we have here is the natural convergence of two extremes, for sophisticated avant-gardism and a purely utilitarian, vulgar approach to art, despite their apparent opposition to each other, are in fact two different manifestations of petty-bourgeois ideology.² Incidentally, if we want to find an explanation for the increasing popularity of Maoism in a number of advanced capitalist countries, is this not the place to look—in the reviviscence of the petty-bourgeois element? But that is a separate issue.

What is the implication of the facts we have cited? It seems to me that they support the following conclusion: the real conditions of the ideological struggle, and the

¹ *Contemporaneo*, No. 13, 1968.

² In a response to the author of these lines which was published in the Italian weekly *L'Espresso* (September 20, 1970) Sanguineti attempted to disprove my contention that his views concerning the "Asiatic" development of Marxism-Leninism were petty-bourgeois in nature. His attempt was not crowned with success. Failing to find any convincing arguments, my opponent simply reiterated his ideas in a declarative fashion. "We cannot view Mao's thoughts," he wrote, "as a manifestation of petty-bourgeois extremism. If they insist on this definition, then I am prepared to declare myself an incurable petty bourgeois." Well, as they say, that's his business, but what does that have to do with Marxism-Leninism?

development of modern art negate any attempts to bring together and fuse Marxism with ideological movements alien to it, to integrate Marxist-Leninist aesthetics with the aesthetics of decadence. Attempts of this sort are fundamentally at odds with Leninism and its methodology, with Leninist principles for guiding the spiritual life of society.

In this connection I would like to cite one typical example from the history of the ideological struggle. In 1922 an essay by V. Bazarov entitled "Oswald Spengler and His Critics" was published in the journal *Krasnaya nov*. The noteworthy feature of this essay, whose author Lenin called a "semi-Berkeleian, semi-Humean of the Machist sect"¹ in his book *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, is that Spengler is virtually made out to be an ally of Marxism in his criticism of bourgeois civilisation. Bazarov, of course, cannot totally ignore the flaws in Spengler's conception; but the fact that the decline of bourgeois culture finds specific reflection in this conception demonstrates its objective value for the author, as a basis for exploring points of contact between the conception and Marxism. "It would seem," writes Bazarov, "that Marxist criticism ... must have ... derived some satisfaction from ascertaining that in its decline bourgeois thought was drawing near to that conception of history which up to that point had been defended only by revolutionary socialism. . . ."² And the author wonders why Marxists did not derive such satisfaction, but assumed a highly critical attitude toward Spengler.

We are not certain of Lenin's immediate reaction to Bazarov's essay. But there is some indirect evidence that his reaction was negative, if only on the basis of a letter written by the editor of *Krasnaya nov*, A. Voronsky, which he sent to Lenin along with the issue of the journal which contained Bazarov's essay. The very fact that the editor sent a special package along with a letter of explanation (in the letter Voronsky admitted that many of the views expressed by Bazarov and by N. Sukhanov in his essay "June 1917" did not "fit in with our views", but that this "compromise" was necessary in order to win over the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 111.

² *Krasnaya nov*, No. 2, 1922, p. 227.

reading public)¹ is indicative of a great deal. Speaking at a meeting commemorating the founding of *Krasnaya nov* in 1927, Voronsky acknowledged that Lenin had "taken him to task" for publishing Sukhanov's memoirs and Bazarov's essay, noting that "in his opinion Spengler was not interesting and there was no reason to study him in Soviet Russia. . ."²

All this—Bazarov's essay, Voronsky's attempts to justify its publication, and Lenin's reaction—is extremely important from a methodological point of view.

Oswald Spengler did, in fact, express the crisis of bourgeois civilisation with great forcefulness. The feeling of lingering death, a presentiment of the end of "Faustian man" and the destruction of a culture and science "going to meet self-annihilation through excessive refinement of intellect"³—all these things are expressed with the greatest pungency. But those who on this basis attempted to demonstrate a kinship between Spengler and Marxism ignored another aspect of the issue. Through his apocalyptic moods and negativism Spengler's hope for the salvation of Western civilisation becomes more and more evident; he sees this salvation in "true socialism", having in mind despotic military dictatorship.

"Pessimism?" was the name Spengler gave to the booklet in which he answered those who reproved him for being pessimistic and inconsolable. The booklet is permeated with cold, calculating, Prussian "optimism", energetic efficiency and practical outlook. The art and "abstract thinking" of the past, in Spengler's opinion, should be replaced by an art of "cement and steel", by poetry "written by men with iron nerves". And what a frightening tone now dominates the voice of the former mourner and denouncer when he closes the brochure with the words, "We Germans will no longer return to Goethe; we will go instead to Caesar."⁴

Undoubtedly strict parallels will not do here, but still are these lessons from the recent past not instructive from

¹ *Novy mir*, No. 12, 1964.

² *Prozhektor*, No. 6, 1927, p. 19.

³ Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, Erster Band, München, 1923, S. 544.

⁴ Oswald Spengler, *Pessimismus? Reden und Aufsätze*, München, 1938, S. 79.

the point of view of today's disputes with those who support the integration of socialist realism with decadence and hasten to welcome the imaginary convergence of modern "twilight" bourgeois culture and socialist culture?

That, in general, is our attitude toward various modernist, non-realistic currents in art.

Now a few words about the second aspect of the problem of guiding artistic activities, the *efficacy* of such guidance.

There is no need to demonstrate that any purposeful attempt to influence some process implies an effort to achieve certain real results. In other words the concept of efficacy is inseparable from the very idea, the very principle of influence, and guidance and organisation; otherwise the principle would lose its meaning.

But is the concept of efficacy applicable to such fields of endeavour as art? Is this concept relevant at all to a sphere where spontaneity, inspiration, intuition and fantasy play such a vital role?

In answering this question the first point we should make is that the category of efficacy logically proceeds from our realisation that directing the development of literature and art *conforms to their laws of development*. A inevitably entails B. In affirming the principle of the purposeful directing of the artistic process, we cannot help but consider the results of this direction. This is wholly legitimate, though somewhat speculative—like any logical construction that proceeds, not so much from life, but from some other logical construction.

In this case let us consider the practical aspects of the development of artistic activity. In his closing speech at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers Gorky spoke of the "victory of Bolshevism" at the congress. Was this not an acknowledgement of the enormous *efficacy* of the congress as a truly historical and in many ways crucial event in the development of our literature and in the ideological life of the country?

Recall that Gorky began his speech by saying that "certain—perhaps even many—writers do not understand why the congress was organised. 'What's the sense in it?' these people ask. 'We'll discuss a few things and break up, and everything will be like before.'" ¹ Gorky called these sceptic-

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* in thirty volumes, Vol. 27, p. 337.

tics "strange", "indifferent" people. For Gorky the *practical* results of the congress were obvious. They consisted above all in the uniting of Soviet writers, the fact that men of letters who yesterday had been regarded as vacillating, non-party writers "acknowledged Bolshevism as the sole militant guiding idea in creation"¹ and "did pretty well in learning to think the way the proletariat taught them".² For Gorky there was no question that the writers' congress had a beneficial influence on the future development of Soviet literature.

Thus both the First Writers' Congress and the tremendous amount of work that preceded it, particularly the well-known resolution passed on April 23, 1932 by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) "On the Reorganisation of Literary and Art Organisations"; and the activities of the Organisational Bureau headed by Gorky, which was responsible for guiding the literary community in the period preceding the congress—all these things can be regarded as the practical implementation of Lenin's statements on the necessity of directing the artistic process and organising its results.

In speaking of the effective guidance of literature and art, one should by no means ignore the profoundly specific character of this sphere, a feature particularly accentuated by Lenin. Least appropriate would be quantitative indices and utilitarian notions on the productivity and efficacy of measures employed. It is utterly naïve to expect that a resolution (even the most correct and apropos) or measure (even the most successful) will immediately bear fruit in the form of new books, theatrical productions or films. Excessive haste, the "nudging" of events, all forms of pressure, acceleration, and impatience are more harmful to cultural policies than to any other sphere and contradict Leninist principles for guiding art.

Does this mean that there are no real, *objective* criteria for judging the efficacy of such guidance?

No, not at all. The point is that these criteria are not of a superficial nature; they are primarily *qualitative* and cannot be reduced to purely external indicators. The art of guiding art, besides everything else, consists in a pro-

¹ M. Gorky, op. cit., p. 338.

² Ibid., p. 339.

found realisation of this fact, an ability to look forward, to proceed on the basis of the primary, governing factors and not those of a temporary, transient sort, in the ability to judge the artist's "efficiency" not only on the basis of his actions today, but also on his potential, and, if necessary, to give preference to the latter.

Here is one example from Lenin's own experience: he was extremely interested in getting Gorky to write regularly for the journal *Proletary* (see, for example, his letter from Geneva dated February 7, 1908), and the urgent requirements of the political struggle demanded Gorky's full cooperation, but nonetheless Lenin did not forget to make a proviso. "If you don't like writing small, short, periodical (weekly or fortnightly) articles, if you prefer to work on *big* things—then, of course, I would not advise you to interrupt it. It will be of greater benefit!"¹ And a few days later in a letter to Lunacharsky Lenin said that he was "dreaming" about making Gorky head of the literary criticism section of *Proletary*, but once again he stipulated, "If a man is busy with an important work, and if this work would suffer from him being torn away for minor things, such as a newspaper, and journalism, then it would be foolish and criminal to disturb and interrupt him! That is something I very well understand and feel."²

Neither long lists of works that have been published, nor the number of organisational activities in the arts (meetings, discussions, speeches, trips, etc.) or any other numerical indicators, despite their importance, can be regarded as exhaustive evidence of the efficacy of guiding literature and art. These factors acquire significance only in combination with others which at first glance seem less appreciable—creating a healthy atmosphere for artistic activities, an atmosphere of ideological staunchness and creative exactitude, creating conditions favourable to the appearance and development of new talent, getting artists to solve the most pressing tasks facing society today, inculcating in them a feeling of responsibility, enhancing the authority of the artist in society, etc.

These things do not lend themselves to formal calcula-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 34, p. 380.

² *Ibid.*, p. 383.

tion, but they are nonetheless real and *objective* criteria; without them we would arrive at an impoverished and one sided idea of the efficacy of guiding art's development.

* * *

Among the Theses of the CPSU Central Committee *On the Centenary of the Birth of V. I. Lenin* we read the following: "Basic to Lenin's approach to social phenomena and processes is the organic unity of scientific objectivity and principled assessment from working-class position." This is the methodological foundation of the Leninist way of working with the creative intelligentsia and the Leninist principles governing the party's guidance of artistic activities.

In matters of this sort no attendant circumstances, no chance subjective factors unrelated to principle could alter Lenin's position. It was based on party principles, and only party principles. It was determined by the interests of the people, the party, the state and the revolution. And that is why Lenin's views on literature and art, his principles for guiding activities in this extremely complex sphere of life, form an integral whole. Here is a well-structured system of principles, forms, methods, appraisals, and judgments; everything that Lenin wrote on the subject—from his fundamental works to individual pronouncements, comments, letters and notes—is permeated with a revolutionary spirit and the major initial conception of literature and art as one of the concerns of the party and the people.

ALPHA
AND OMEGA

...*Affinity with the people* is the alpha and omega of aesthetics today.

V. G. Belinsky

I

Among us affinity with the people is more often and more eagerly discussed than practically anything else. People swear by it, appeal to it, fight for it. But above all, they argue about it. It has long been noted that when people talk about affinity with the people, they sometimes mean things which are not only different, but often contradictory. Even Pushkin turned his attention to this remarkable state of affairs: "For some time now it has been customary to speak of affinity with the people, to complain about its absence in literary works, but no one has bothered to define this affinity."¹

Belinsky echoed Pushkin when he wrote in his unfinished essay "An Overview of Folk Poetry and Its Significance: Russian Folk Poetry", "Many seem to be aware of what 'affinity with the people' means, but is the phrase all that simple and comprehensible? Not everything is in fact what it seems to be. Like any other phrase which has some meaning, this one requires a definition. The phrase 'affinity with the people' is one of those which seems to be too understandable precisely because it lacks a definite, precise meaning."²

More than a century has passed since Belinsky uttered these words, but to this day in arguments about affinity with the people one still often hears comments tinged with irony and reflecting bewilderment over the surprising number and dissimilarity of formulas, conceptions and points of view. And every time it sets one to thinking

¹ A. S. Pushkin, *Collected Works* in ten volumes, Vol. 7, Moscow, 1958, p. 38 (in Russian).

² V. G. Belinsky, *Works* in three volumes, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1948, p. 118 (in Russian).

—who, exactly, is speaking about this affinity, and what does he mean by it?

Is this because the terminology has not been properly worked out? Or more broadly, because of the inadequacy of language as a means of communication? Or still more broadly, a manifestation of the sacramental “incommunicability” which we find it convenient to blame for all the sins and disorders of modern life?

No doubt of it, the imprecise use of terminology has an extremely negative effect on the fruitfulness of scientific discussions. But everyone would probably agree that when scholars disagree in matters of *principle*—in their views of partisanship in art or socialist realism, for example—most often (not always, but most often) it turns out that the terms used are not at fault. Practical experience convincingly demonstrates that the inadequacy of human speech is not, as a rule, an insuperable barrier to understanding between those who hold similar political and ideological views. In any case, even if one regards “incommunicability” as one of the characteristic features of life today, one should not forget that it is not so much the cause as the result of certain social processes and can be viewed as evidence of the organic incompatibility of alien ideologies.

No, affinity with the people is by no means interpreted in different ways simply because people cannot come to an agreement about its meaning. There is another factor involved here: this aesthetic category represents a field of fierce ideological confrontation, an arena where hostile forces clash with each other. It represents that knot where art is tightly and inextricably woven with the struggle of ideas. Here, if you please, is one of the principal spheres where ideology and politics manifest themselves in art.

This is the essence of the struggle waged at various historical stages by Russian revolutionary-democratic thought and then by Marxist aesthetics against all sorts of reactionary, liberal and petty-bourgeois conceptions of what affinity with the people implies.

Pushkin, Vyazemsky, Somov, Glinka, Küchelbeker and others all wrote about this affinity, but only progressive Russian revolutionary democratic criticism wholly affirmed this principle as one of the corner-stones of realist aesthetics. In place of idealistic, pseudo-romantic tendencies and

snobbish, élitist conceptions of various sorts ("pure art", "art for art's sake", etc.) the revolutionary democrats championed a literature that was rooted in the life of the people. This was the trend which received a most profound theoretical interpretation on the part of revolutionary-democratic criticism, and which it supported in practice as the only true and promising path for literature to follow. In this connection one might recall, for instance, Belinsky's essay "On the Russian Short Story and Gogol's Short Stories", Chernyshevsky's "Sketches on the Gogolian Period in Russian Literature", and the works of Dobrolyubov.

In speaking about affinity with the people, Belinsky unambiguously revealed his position in the course of fierce ideological and class conflicts occurring at the time not only in literature and aesthetics, but also in Russian society as a whole. Hence his harsh irony in criticising the high-flown terminology masking the social essence of the question, that terminology which in the discussion of affinity with the people was regarded as an attribute of decency (in the essay on folk poetry mentioned above, Belinsky cites some examples of the terms used: "magical epithet", "magical word", "sacred hieroglyph", etc.).

"Poetry is true poetry only if it manifests affinity with the people,"¹ wrote Belinsky, revealing the organic connection between this phenomenon and such concepts as realism and truth. False, hypocritical, anti-realistic works cannot reflect the character and aspirations of the people even if they contain scenes from the everyday life of the people and their heroes use the language of the common people.

This was the position from which the revolutionary democrats waged their struggle against the official interpretation of affinity with the people, against the reactionary aspects of Slavophilism, the attempts to give this principle a primitive, sentimentalised interpretation. A keen ideological struggle with obvious social overtones developed in particular around the concept of national character.

Reactionary criticism attributed traits to the Russian people which corresponded with that notorious formula

¹ V. G. Belinsky, *Works* in three volumes, Vol. 2, p. 119.

"Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationalism", with "Nationalism" and national ideas serving in this context as the crown and base of the conservative conception formulated by the assistant minister (and later minister) of education, S. Uvarov, and taken up by a number of writers, N. Butyrsky, M. Pogodin, and S. Shevyrev. The revolutionary democrats rejected out of hand this view of the national character (their position found its most passionate and politically acute expression in Belinsky's letter to Gogol) and treated this aesthetic category in historical perspective. Typical in this respect, for example, was Saltykov-Shchedrin's essay on Alexei Koltsov. Ridiculing those "theoreticians of an exclusively national art" who believed that there were "no dissonances or false notes" in the life of the people, the critic wrote, "Where does all this exaggeration, all this flattery lead to? Don't people themselves represent a sufficiently live organism to get along without our panegyrics? We believe that both the vices and virtues of any people are the result of their historical development, and consequently that they cannot be made to account for either one or the other."¹ In another essay, "Kokhanovskaya's Stories", Shchedrin once again emphasises, "If we really sympathise with the masses, we must take them for what they are and assume as our starting point that moral and intellectual level where they now find themselves, and go on from there."²

Without ignoring in the least the political backwardness and social inertness of a certain sector of the population, the revolutionary democrats believed firmly in the revolutionary potential of the people. When Chernyshevsky said that it was necessary for Russia to "take up the hatchet", he was not speaking idly; his words expressed the readiness for revolution which existed in the depths of the people's consciousness. For Chernyshevsky and people of like mind affinity with the people was bound up with the social revolution, and the struggle for the realisation of this principle in literature was viewed as part of the revolutionary struggle.

The scientific, profoundly democratic and revolutionary

¹ M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *O literature* (On Literature), Moscow, 1953, p. 24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

views of the revolutionary democrats on art's affinity with the people were, despite inevitable historical limitations, the prologue to the Marxist approach to this problem and largely prepared the way for its implementation.

Only Marxist aesthetics, based on a purely scientific and wholly revolutionary theory and impregnated with the experience of the proletariat's political struggle, provided a genuine solution to the problem of art's involvement with the people. The consistent Marxist criticism of liberal and populist movements in art, of decadence, of the "single stream" theory and other bourgeois tendencies, is part of the overall struggle against attempts to blunt the sharpness and irreconcilability of class antagonisms, to halt the process of revolutionary development (so called "friends of the people" have played a particularly obnoxious role in these attempts).

Thus one of the fundamental watersheds between bourgeois and socialist ideology runs through the sphere of affinity with the people. Our opponents, incidentally, are also beginning to recognise this fact now. A certain László Révész, for example, author of an anti-communist booklet published in West Germany several years ago and called *Ideology and Practice in the Foreign and Home Policy of the Soviet Union*, writes that the concept of the people "in communist ideology, theory and practice has a different meaning than it does for us", since, you see, "it includes the concept of class".¹ The reader is thus presented with the rather stale idea that "for us", meaning in bourgeois ideology, theory and practice, "the people" is a concept that has no class overtones.

This is just one of many examples demonstrating how bourgeois thought attempts to set its own concept of the "classless society" in opposition to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of class struggle. Bourgeois propaganda sets forth different variants of this concept as though they represented the latest advance in modern sociological studies. But what is remarkable is that all these theories reflect the desire of capitalism's apologists to grant the bourgeoisie the right to represent the interests of the people as a whole.

¹ László Révész, *Ideologie und Praxis in der sowjetischen Innen- und Aussenpolitik*, Mainz, 1965, S. 12 13.

Closely connected with this tendency, incidentally, is the pseudo-democratic, pseudo-realistic trend in modern bourgeois art which has become so popular in many capitalist countries, especially in the United States. This sort of art plays on the predilections and tastes (for the most part undeveloped) of the "mass consumer" in order to propagandise and entrench bourgeois ideology, morality and psychology. Genuine realism is replaced by down-to-earth naturalism and excessively graphic representation; intelligibility and accessibility of form give way to primitivism; banal optimism and an overly practical frame of mind takes the place of strength of will. This sort of art instills the idea that the ordinary bourgeois is a model of your ordinary, simple "man of the people", and the capitalist way of life represents the best way of preserving the intransient human values which everyone understands and holds dear. Thus a whole complex of means are created which are apparently designed to safeguard capitalism and mask its bourgeois essence with a false affinity with the people.

These means make themselves felt with particular acuity in those forms of art directly connected with the mass media and therefore possessing an almost limitless audience, above all television and the cinema. Comic books published in the millions and popular music perform the same function. Popular culture, art for the masses, tries to win over as many readers and spectators as possible, and one should not underestimate its harmful ideological and aesthetic influence.

But this is only one side of the coin. In discussing the ideological struggle being waged around the principle of affinity with the people, one should also take into consideration various decadent trends and élitist conceptions; here the typical orientation is sophisticated experimental art cut off from the social and aesthetic needs of the masses. This art lacks historical perspective; it is ignorant of the objective laws of social development and the decisive moving force of history—the people. This ignorance is reflected in its demonstratively asocial content and intentional inaccessibility of form. Of course one must differentiate between various sorts of decadent art and in each given instance consider both the subjective intentions of the artist and the objective orientation of his work, as well

as the prospects for his ideological and aesthetic evolution. But this varied approach must always proceed from the realisation that *decadence is fundamentally contrary to the principle of affinity with the people*. This is its very nature. Such is the logic behind the uncompromising struggle between the two ideologies clashing swords in the arena of modern art.

Developing Marx's and Engels' ideas concerning the partisanship of the socialist proletariat's literature under new historical conditions, Lenin was the first to tie the problem of society's spiritual life and the development of art and literature with the workers' movement, with the immediate tasks facing the proletarian revolution. Only literature as part of the common cause of the proletariat, only literature directly bound up with the proletariat's revolutionary movement and therefore truly free could claim to express the interests and aspirations of the masses.

Just as the highest ideals of humanity find their embodiment in the revolutionary struggle of the working class and its party, so too the idea of the artist's devotion to the people finds its fullest and most concentrated expression in the principle of communist partisanship in literature. The partisanship of art as Lenin understood it implies neither sectarian limitation nor the notorious "dictate from above", as our ideological opponents claim, but rather a free and conscious association with that social movement whose historical mission is the liberation of millions of working men and women. That is why we view communist partisanship in literature as the highest form of affinity with the people. In this sense *the Leninist doctrine of partisanship is the foundation, the kernel of the Marxist conception of art's affinity with the people*.

Lenin's statement regarding the presence in bourgeois society of two nations within each single nation and two national cultures within each national culture played a most significant role in the development of the Marxist conception of art's close connection with the people.

Liberal bourgeois ideologists, as we know, have long attempted to interpret such concepts as "the people" and "the nation" in an anti-historical way transcending the notion of class, in the spirit of the so-called "single stream"; no clear-cut class distinction is made between different and hostile social phenomena, between progres-

sive, revolutionary forces on the one hand, and conservative, reactionary forces on the other. Earlier we noted what role these theories play in the arsenal of contemporary anti-communist propaganda.

The Leninist doctrine of two nations rids the concepts of the nation and the people of extraneous bourgeois elements and facilitates a genuinely scientific, class-oriented solution to the problem of literature's affinity with the people. It makes it absolutely clear that when this affinity is not tied to partisanship and animated by a communist world view, it is organically alien to the aesthetics of socialist realism. Any attempt to oppose the interests of the people to the interests of the working class, the proletarian revolution and Marxism is nothing more than a petty-bourgeois distortion of this affinity. This was convincingly demonstrated by Lenin in his book *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats*.

Lenin taught that under capitalism one must be able to discern two cultures in each national culture: clerical, reactionary bourgeois culture, and democratic, progressive culture connected with the life of the people, with their fundamental interests and revolutionary aspirations. This dialectical class oriented approach also makes it possible to solve the problem of the cultural heritage of the past. Everything in the culture of the past that is connected with progressive development, with democratic elements, everything in which the spirit of the people, their national character and love of freedom find their manifestation (sometimes directly, and sometimes indirectly), belongs to the people, constituting its heritage, and therefore must be preserved and adopted by the revolutionary proletariat.

Thus affinity with the people is the most important criterion in judging the culture of the past. A nihilistic attitude toward this culture, a position Lenin criticised sharply and uncompromisingly, is, in effect, against the interests of the people and the proletariat, and represents a reverse bourgeois tactic.

Lenin's essays on Lev Tolstoy are a classic model of the Marxist way to apply the criterion of affinity with the people, in all its complexity and multifariousness, to the artistic process. Lenin showed that a truly great artist can-

not help (though it may often run contrary to his own subjective intentions) reflecting revolution, the most essential and decisive factor in the life of the people, in his works. The logic of a faithful recreation of reality "forces" him to do so. In other words, that spontaneous, or rather, inborn feeling of affinity with the people inherent to any great artist objectively entails that the artist will recreate revolution, or at any rate certain of its aspects (his interpretation, of course, is another matter). This was true in particular of Tolstoy, who did not understand the Russian revolution, but nonetheless became its mirror, and "succeeded in conveying with remarkable force the moods of the large masses that are oppressed by the present system, in depicting their condition and expressing their spontaneous feelings and anger".¹

Studying the interconnection between the artist, the revolution and the people as reflected in Tolstoy, Lenin reveals the complexity of these relations, a complexity due largely to the social heterogeneity of the very concept of "the people". In his works Tolstoy reflected with merciless truthfulness and unsurpassed artistic mastery the tragic psychological conflicts of millions of Russian peasants, who, as Lenin stressed, *already* detested their exploiters but had not *yet* risen up in conscious struggle against them.² Herein was Tolstoy's strength as a writer allied with the people. At the same time Tolstoy did not discern and naturally did not reflect those real social forces which would lead the toiling masses of Russia and assure their liberation, and so his affinity with the people was limited by historical circumstance.

One of the most interesting and topical aspects of the problem of art and the people as it appears in Lenin's ideological and theoretical treatment is the democratism of culture, the relations between the artist and the people, between the intelligentsia and the masses. Of particular interest in this respect is Lenin's struggle against reactionary, bourgeois theories designed to isolate art from the liberation movement, and in particular Lenin's pronouncements concerning the Cadet collection of essays entitled *Vekhi* (Landmarks).

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, pp. 323-24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 353.

The declared aim of the writers who contributed to this book (P. Struve, N. Berdyaev, S. Bulgakov, M. Herschensohn and others) was to defend culture from the dark, cruel forces of popular insurrection; in doing so they repudiated the so called idolisation of the people, opposing the individual as the sole creator and preserver of cultural values to the masses, the people.

After the October Revolution the ideas of the Vekhists were developed in the book of essays *Oswald Spengler and the Twilight of Europe*. Spengler's thesis regarding the inherent enmity between civilisation and culture was used by the authors of the essays to attack democratic art, the people and the revolution. Quoting Leontyev (whom he calls "one of the most penetrating Russian thinkers") and Vladimir Solovyov, Berdyaev wrote, "We have long been aware of the distinction between culture and civilisation. All Russian religious thinkers have affirmed this distinction. They have all experienced a sort of horror from the destruction of culture and the coming triumph of civilisation." Berdyaev believes that the essence of civilisation is "spiritual philistinism, bourgeois mentality", and affirms that "capitalism and socialism are equally infected by this spirit". "It makes absolutely no difference," he writes, "whether civilisation will be capitalist or socialist; in either case it will be a God-denying, philistine civilisation."¹

These theories were repulsed by Lenin, who called *Vekhi* an "encyclopaedia of liberal renegacy"² and *Oswald Spengler and the Twilight of Europe* "a literary screen for a White Guard organisation".³ As a counterbalance to these reactionary, élitist views of culture and art as a sphere governed exclusively by the intellectual elect, Lenin substantiated the thesis that *art belongs to the people*, that it must be firmly rooted in the life of the people, that it must raise their ideological and aesthetic level and at the same time be nurtured by their experience, their struggle.

This is where the problem of democratic form in art, its

¹ *Osvald Shpengler i zakat Yevropy* (Oswald Spengler and the Twilight of Europe), N. A. Berdyaev, Y. M. Bukshpan, F. A. Stepun, S. L. Frank, Moscow, 1922, pp. 65-66.

² V. I. Lenin, *On Literature and Art*, Moscow, 1967, p. 36.

³ V. I. Lenin, *O literature i iskusstve* (On Literature and Art), Moscow, 1969, p. 497.

accessibility to the broadest masses, becomes relevant. Raised on the traditions of progressive Russian and world literature, Lenin especially appreciated in art noble simplicity and clarity of form in combination with profound content. The "latest thing", "experimental" art striving to be in vogue, formalist devices these things were alien to Lenin and evoked nothing other than indignation and inner aesthetic protest.

We are not speaking here, of course, about Lenin's personal taste. Earlier we noted that in this respect Lenin was extremely reserved and cautious; he did not want his aesthetic inclinations, likes and dislikes to be interpreted as directives. But democratism in art was for Lenin a fundamental issue. He was concerned with the accessibility of art for the people, without which it would be incapable of exercising an ideological and aesthetic influence on the masses. He was concerned about an organic contact between the artist and the people who deserved the right to enjoy beauty by their revolutionary struggle. In other words, he was concerned about *art's affinity with the people*.

That is why Lenin was so irreconcilably opposed to literary gimmickry and the deliberate complication of artistic form, things which would blur the content and make it difficult for the ordinary reader or spectator to grasp. Lenin was convinced that realism in art was not merely one of several competing schools in art, on a par with, say, acmeism or futurism. Realism (not, of course, in the narrow, dogmatically impoverished sense of uninspired description, but rather in the sense of fidelity to life, its colours, its voices, its contradictions) was for him the truly effective path leading to an artistic perception of the world, to the most profound reconstruction of the true picture of the world. It was realism with its inexhaustibly rich palette of artistic means—as rich as life itself—which could fully guarantee that art would fulfil its highest calling: to serve the people, the revolution, socialism. One of the basic principles of Leninist aesthetics is the inseparability of realism and affinity with the people in art.

For Lenin—a politician, the organiser and leader of the Communist Party of the first socialist state in the world—the formula "art belongs to the people" was by no means a theoretical abstraction, but something of wholly practical

significance, for it pointed the way to the creation of a new, socialist culture.

This task arose before the new land of the Soviets virtually on the second day after the revolution was victorious. It was necessary to launch a massive campaign against backwardness, illiteracy and ignorance. It was necessary to spread knowledge, culture, the achievements of the arts, to open up the spiritual treasures of mankind to the masses. It was necessary to raise these masses to a higher level of consciousness, to begin to educate them and train cadres of the new, revolutionary intelligentsia, including artists, those who would be responsible for creating the art of the age of socialism. It was necessary to repudiate in practice the theories of the truckling Mensheviks about Russia's "unpreparedness" for revolution, to prove that the socialist revolution could indeed open up hitherto unheard of possibilities for the intellectual development of the masses.

Under Lenin's direct guidance and with his personal participation the party worked out a plan for cultural revolution in our country and began the gigantic task of putting that plan into action. The cultural revolution carried out during the post revolutionary years represented nothing less than the realisation of Lenin's ideas about art as the property of the people; here, if one might say so, socialist art's affinity with the people found its "substantiation".

Long before the October Revolution Lenin uttered these prophetic words about socialist literature:

"It will be a free literature, because the idea of socialism and sympathy with the working people, and not greed or careerism, will bring ever new forces to its ranks. It will be a free literature, because it will serve, not some satiated heroine, not the bored 'upper ten thousand' suffering from fatty degeneration, but the millions and tens of millions of working people—the flower of the country, its strength and its future."¹

Now the whole world acknowledges that our literature is a factor of the greatest importance in the intellectual development of twentieth century man. What it has achieved is possible only for a truly *free* literature. And our literature acquired its freedom because it allied itself with

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp. 48-49.

the proletariat, with millions of working people, because it came to *reflect the will and aspirations of the people* in the fullest sense. And so Lenin's prophesy has come true.

The topic "Lenin and Art" has been treated in numerous specialised studies,¹ yet it is by no means exhausted; in fact its *inexhaustibility* is becoming increasingly apparent. The ideological struggle today, the processes taking place in world culture, the actual development of socialist realism—all these things pose new problems which can be solved only by studying Lenin's approach more thoroughly and applying it creatively.

Here it would be apropos to note that many leading Marxist theoreticians and leaders of the international communist movement, among them Mehring, Lafargue, Plekhanov, Lunacharsky, Vorovsky, Olminsky, Shahumyan, Zetkin, Liebknecht and Gramsci, played an important role in establishing the foundations of the Marxist conception of art's affinity with the people, thereby enriching our theoretical perceptions of the problem.

Here is only one of the most recent examples. A few years ago a book of essays and sketches by Antonio Gramsci, a leader and ideologist of the Italian communist movement, was published in Russian translation. The materials gathered under the headings "Italian Literature without 'National' Traits" and "On Our Literature for the People" demonstrate the consistent battle waged under Italian fascism by the author for an art genuinely in touch with the people; they contain valuable theoretical reflections and historical literary observations on this problem. Gramsci's thoughts on Dostoevsky's "national" sentiments, his recognition of the intelligentsia's mission with respect to the people; the author's criticism of Italy's so-called "literature for the humiliated" and, in this connection, his comparison of Alessandro Manzoni's aristocratism (his novel *I promessi sposi* [The Betrothed]) with Tolstoy's ties with the people; his attempt to grasp some of the laws explaining the tastes of the ordinary reader (why serialised novels and detective stories are so popular, and so on); his

¹ Consider the works published only in the past ten or fifteen years by B. Meilakh, V. Shcherbina, B. Ryurikov, M. Ovsyannikov, A. Myasnikov, A. Volkov, I. Dzeverin, Y. Elsberg, L. Plotkin and others.

thoughts on the special features of folklore, in particular the folk song, the interrelations between "official" morality and the morality of the people, the cultural heterogeneity of the masses and much more—all these things not only demonstrate the erudition and theoretical sophistication of the author, but also show the close, direct link between the apparently academic problem of art's closeness to the people and topical ideological and even political issues.

In the works of Soviet scholars the question of art's affinity with the people is viewed as an inherent component of the aesthetics of socialist realism, as something closely related to other fundamental problems of creativity.

Creative freedom, realism and decadence, partisanship in art, the various ways in which it participates in the ideological struggle, the connection between the artist and the people, the hero and the heroic, ways of mastering artistic truth, realistic traditions reflecting the viewpoint of the people and the latest accomplishments of realism—all these are issues entering into the discussion of art's affinity with the people. Whether we study the nature and features of literary genres, the works of individual artists, or different aspects of the current literary process, literature's closeness to the people invariably emerges (or in any case should emerge) as one of the key ideological and aesthetic criteria, determining to a considerable degree the point of view one takes with regard to some problem, the nature of one's evaluation, the conclusions one draws.

I would like to stress that literature's affinity with the people implies a whole sum of factors connected with general theoretical, ideological and artistic "technical" problems, since this affinity—if, of course, it exists at all in a work—does not inform individual, isolated components, but the work as a whole, from beginning to end. Taken as such, in and of itself, this affinity is in essence an aesthetic abstraction. Its very nature as reflected in art requires *comprehensive* methods, an all-embracing approach, a study of connections and mutual influence.

That type of criticism which is always inclined to rely on norms finds it difficult to adjust to the fact that this affinity in art is multifaceted and mobile, that it is a phenomenon without strict boundaries. It cannot be reduced to a mechanical sum of features, it cannot always be isolated through analysis in chemically pure form, so to speak,

or be put in a test-tube, and for many this is a disconcerting fact. Sometimes it gives rise to doubts—maybe we are only dealing with an aesthetic phantom? One reaction is the practical refusal to attempt any serious scientific definition of this affinity, its traits, forms and methods of implementation in art. It is striking, for example, that we most often and most willingly discuss it in negative terms; we assiduously spell out what it is *not* (it *cannot* be limited to description of national costumes, it *cannot* be reduced to folklore traditions, it does *not* have anything in common with patriarchal tendencies in literature, etc.), but what this affinity with the people actually *is*, somehow remains out of focus.

Fearing the bugbear of normative definitions and vulgar oversimplification, we scarcely study how the philosophy, norms of morality and aesthetic views inherent to the working man are manifested in literary works, or what sort of connection exists (maybe not a direct connection, maybe one that is complex, but no less real for that) between the ideological and aesthetic principles of the artist, the artistic methods he employs, and those principles which have existed in the people's psychology and folk art since time immemorial.

Recognising the superficiality and, from the viewpoint of the specialist, the possible impropriety of the comparison, let me risk saying that affinity with the people as an aesthetic category in some ways resembles the quantum with its changing, dualistic, elusive nature, qualities which, as we know, led certain physicists to deny for some time its materiality. In any case the fact that this phenomenon in art seldom lies on the surface and does not readily lend itself to aesthetic analysis only implies that we must perfect our methods of analysis, sharpen our scientific "instruments", expand our dialectical, scientific approach to the problem and move more boldly from the sphere of definitions to the sphere of real phenomena.

It is both interesting and revealing that no matter how heated our theoretical discussions are in general, things stay more or less on an even keel when general principles are the issue at hand. But divergences of opinion—often of the most fundamental sort—most clearly manifest themselves when we move from theory to the sphere of artistic practice, when the aesthetic category ceases being a disem-

bodied "naked" idea and takes on the flesh and blood of the word. This is where numerous questions arise, and the answers depend on the viewpoint of the scholar. Be that as it may, in the end what is most important is not a knowledge of formulas or an arsenal of quotations, but rather *what* the critic considers to be true affinity with the people in literature, *what* constitutes a departure from this affinity or a false pretence thereof, *how* he understands the aesthetic ideal of the people, their moral code, what sort of hero embodies the traits of the national character. This is what is decisive.

In order to avoid misunderstanding and false interpretations I should like to make it clear that we are not dealing here with empirical description. A serious discussion of literature is impossible without a solid theoretical foundation. That is obvious. Are not "pure" theory and concrete analysis both indispensable to genuine scholarship? It is essential only that the real literary process with its real contradictions serve as the point of departure and foundation for analysis. Not simply affinity with the people, but that *affinity in its concrete artistic embodiment, artistically "materialised"*, so to speak, in a book, in poetry, in drama, in the author's own life that is the main thing.

Given such an approach, that which is real and current and dictated by life is brought to the foreground by the very logic of the discussion. Moreover it happens that questions which appear to have been discussed and illuminated from all angles by literary scholarship suddenly reveal new facets and aspects.

One such question is the writer's attitude to the revolution, a traditional problem in Soviet literary criticism.

It might appear that with the passage of time less and less would be left to be discovered and resolved in this area. And this is partly the case: we know much more today than we did yesterday, and we have answers (maybe not exhaustive, and by no means conclusive) to questions which at one time we did not even pose. There is no sense in minimising what has already been done. But the dialectics of the search for scientific truth is such that the process is, in essence, unending. The connection between art and revolution is one of those problems whose borders do not diminish with study, but rather expand, revealing ever newer aspects and demanding constant investigation. One

might say that the more we know in this field, the more aware we become of the insufficiency of our knowledge. That probably sounds like a paradox, but that sort of insufficiency should, to a certain extent, be viewed as evidence of the *maturity* of our scientific thought, which is not satisfied with solutions that have already been found.

We have every reason to stress, as we have always done, that the literature of the new world has become the heir of mankind's intellectual treasures, a natural link in the history of Soviet progressive culture, continuing our country's best traditions. One must not forget, however, that we are dealing here with a *fundamentally new* stage in the nation's history, a stage that is not merely connected with social changes of one sort or another, but with *revolution*, the greatest cataclysm in the lives of millions of people. It is only natural that the literature born of this revolution should from the very start declare itself to be *revolutionary* literature. The road it travels is the road of constant struggle, of overcoming resistance and making discoveries.

In this struggle the basic principles of socialist realism have taken shape. These principles were not handed down ready-made. In its youth the literature of the revolution had to work out and establish them in the course of sharp ideological clashes. It involved a constant and difficult search.

All that we have said applies equally well to the principle of affinity with the people. From the very inception of Soviet literature this principle was integral to its revolutionary bent.

If we view the revolution as an eruption of forces latent in the people, as a historical turning point in the life of the working masses—and that, in fact, is how we view it—then clearly the question of the artist's attitude toward the revolution is indissolubly linked with the question of his attitude toward the people. His affinity with the people was directly dependent on the degree to which he allied his art with the hopes and aspirations of the broadest revolutionary masses.

This process, as the history of our literature demonstrates, was complex and contradictory; it varied for different authors, depending on their personal lives, their political biography, artistic individuality and other factors. The example of those artists who did not understand and did

not accept the revolution, cutting themselves off from their native land and the people and smothering their own talent, is no less eloquent than the fate of those who entered the broad path of artistic creation upon grasping the meaning of the revolution and serving the people who made it. The general orientation of this process is clear-cut and unambiguous: you cannot side with the people without accepting and understanding the revolution. An artist who is incapable of comprehending the revolution in an artistic sense, for whom the revolution has not become a source of ideas and creative inspiration, cannot occupy a significant place in the intellectual life of the people.

Thus one might speak of *affinity with the people* as a kind of *ideological and aesthetic equivalent of the artist's revolutionary propensity*. In any case the extent to which this affinity contributes to the development of art (to borrow Dobrolyubov's expression), is without a doubt directly dependent on the degree to which this art is enriched by the ideas, moods, colours and sounds of the revolution.

A treatment of historically crucial events in the life of the people, an ability to depict this life truthfully in light of the progressive ideals of the age, to recreate the leading trends in the world from a position that reflects the fundamental interests of the people—these vital features of art's affinity with the people as understood by Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, are decisive when we analyse the works of a writer who is somehow or other connected with the revolution.

The artist's treatment of the revolution should not be viewed as something fixed and established once and for all. It is not so much *a state* as *a process* which has its own logic in each separate case, its own orientation, its own "zigzags", if you will. Even if we are dealing with an artist who immediately and without hesitation allied himself and his art with the revolution, we still should not overlook those real contradictions which necessarily accompany the search for truth; the process of artistically comprehending the revolution is as inexhaustible as the revolution itself. This is all the more true in those cases where the artist moves gradually to the side of the revolution as a result of objective laws of development, under the influence of real events and the most progressive ideas of his age.

The October Revolution raised a barricade between those who, like Mayakovsky, immediately announced with confidence, "My revolution", and those who unambiguously expressed their hostility to it. But the fact that there was such a dividing line between various responses to the basic question of the age—"Whose side are you on?"—an irrefutable fact of fundamental importance, does not mean that on both sides of this dividing line there were not a considerable number of extremely diverse and transitional forms.

Even those who accepted the revolution often accepted it in different ways. It was one thing, say, for representatives of the old democratic intelligentsia to greet the revolution with professions of loyalty, and another thing, when these professions came from people who entered the new literature leaving behind the flames of the Civil War, those for whom the revolution stood for the beginning of literally everything—creative endeavour, study, entry into the world of culture, and intellectual life in general; and another thing altogether were the complex, painful gropings of those who had to overcome mistakes and prejudices before arriving at an understanding of the revolution.

One cannot help but noting as well certain differences between writers who, for various reasons, found themselves on the other side of the barricade. There is an obvious difference between those who with bitterness and animosity mourned for the past and those who, after their wanderings, returned from emigration, or at least were on the verge of doing so.

Today it is absolutely impossible to approach the problem under consideration without taking into account this diversity of real circumstances, the inconsistencies that truly existed. There's no gainsaying it, one must draw a clear line between typical and inessential phenomena, between those that are central and those that are peripheral, but something else must also be borne in mind: sometimes facts and phenomena which appear to be atypical and secondary in fact reflect basic tendencies and important facets of the process. The fact that a writer did not understand the revolution and maybe ended up in the camp of the enemy by no means signifies that his ideological and creative life should not be analysed in terms of its close ties with the revolution. On the contrary, a genuinely scien-

tific approach supposes just the opposite. To discover the natural connection between the gropings and mistakes and political downfall of a writer, and his ideological and aesthetic evolution as an artist, is also to understand certain aspects (perhaps of a negative sort) of the problem of the artist and the revolution.

Lenin discovered important traits of the first Russian revolution by analysing the works of an artist who did not understand it; in doing so he provided a bold example of how one could penetrate the external covering of ordinary settled opinions and extract the essential kernel from the most complicated aggregate of facts and phenomena that initially seemed absolutely atypical. People may say that Lev Tolstoy and, say, Averchenko or Vinnichenko, or even Kuprin, are figures of widely varying stature. And that is so. But in this instance we are not comparing their talent or their place in literature and the intellectual life of the people; rather, we are discussing a *methodological principle*. If we try to investigate as thoroughly as possible the relation between art and the revolution, we must not study the process in its general outlines, but rather in all its real complexity, grasping not only the main trends, but also the incidental ones. In order to master a grammar completely, it is not enough simply to know the rules; one must also know the exceptions.

For the artist *revolution* is the best—and irreplaceable—*teacher of affinity with the people*. Here, in the whirlpool of historical transformations and struggle, the artist comes to grasp the meaning of revolutionary reality, to rid himself of his misconceptions and overcome alien ideological and aesthetic influences. New possibilities open up before the artist permitting him to merge his art with the revolutionary creation of the masses, and this becomes a token of the genuine flowering of his talent.

II

As a rule, when scholars attempt to determine the objective criteria of affinity with the people in literature and to analyse various aspects of this affinity, they stress two principal factors: the writer's concern with the most important problems occurring in the life of the people, and his discov-

ery of the psychological truth implicit in the national character, types, everyday life, language, and ethnic colour. On the whole there is no reason to object to such an approach, especially if it views all these aspects as an indivisible unity, and not opposed to one another.

But there is another aspect to the problem at hand—the degree to which *the artist's aesthetic ideal reflects affinity with the people*; this quality manifests itself in the artist's profound aesthetic and moral judgments and principles corresponding to those of the people, in those ideas expressed by the artist concerning the beautiful and the ugly which are deeply rooted in the spiritual life of the people. These ideas and judgments determine to a considerable degree the artist's attitude toward reality regardless of which aspects of life or which problems he deals with. The power and truthfulness of his art depends on how close his aesthetic ideal is to the aesthetic ideals of the people.

In other words, *the affinity of the artist's aesthetic ideal with the people's ideal* is one of the most important, if not the most important (for it encompasses both the artist's description of the life of the people, and the revelation of the truth of the national character) *criterion of affinity with the people* in literature.

* * *

In his essay "On Art" Gorky describes a wood-carver who showed him some "convincingly ugly" little figurines he had made of a monk, a drunken priest and others. This is how the carver explains the essence of his creative method: "Some of these little pieces, I make 'em worse than they really are, and others, I make 'em better. I make the nice ones better, and them I don't like, I ain't afraid to make 'em uglier than they be."¹

What considerations govern the carver in his work? What determines his attitude to the types he depicts? Obviously his knowledge of what is good and what is bad, what is useful and beautiful, and what is harmful and ugly. These notions, the outgrowth of traditions he has organically assimilated, the principles governing the people's ethical and aesthetic code, together constitute the carver's

¹ M. Gorky, *O literature. Literaturno-kriticheskie statyi* (On Literature: Critical Essays), Moscow, 1953, p. 791.

aesthetic ideal, in correspondence with which he makes his little figurines.

The active perception and depiction of both the beautiful and the ugly, a frank and clearly expressed concern in both, clear-cut aesthetic judgments—these are typical features of the artistic thought of the people. Here the depiction of people and events is not isolated from the striving for an ideal as the working man understands it.

Thus the principle of affinity with the people in art and the category of the aesthetic ideal are bound up with each other; they are so organically related that even as abstractions they are difficult to isolate.

We should admit that one of the many literary prejudices—no use hiding it—still current among writers and readers, and perhaps one of the most widespread, is a distorted view of the writer's aesthetic ideal. We often associate this concept with vulgar sociological aesthetics, or, on the contrary, with cheap picture postcards depicting a pair of doves and a slick-haired Hollywood star, with the caption "You are my ideal" underneath. Some people believe that today any talk about an ideal sounds a little old-fashioned, to say the least, that it is a truism which need not be discussed; they hint that there is a little too much "sweetness and light", a little too much starry-eyed idealism involved here, a tendency to whitewash reality, to smooth over the rough edges and contradictions. One recalls Pushkin's ironic lines:

*And Lensky drifted off to sleep
While pondering the word "ideal",*

or Chekhov's admission that for him the word "ideal" sounded somehow sugary.

Others believe that the problem of the ideal is something imaginary, fabricated from start to finish by all sorts of theoreticians and dogmatists.

So much for literary prejudices. As for the enemies of Soviet literature, those who reject socialist realism, there can be no doubt as to their views on the subject. They are all touchingly unanimous in their rejection of the socialist ideal of our art.

Marxist-Leninist aesthetics has long since demonstrated the untenability of theories which claim that the representation of life in art can be neutral, independent of the

world outlook, the ideological position and socio-political views of the artist, and today the prospects are hardly very hopeful for resurrecting such theories. Art is not simply a form of cognition; it is always an active evaluation of reality as well, necessarily involving some sort of interest on the part of a social creature with his likes and dislikes, his ideas of what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, and his ideals. For if there is no human activity without human emotion, art without the same is all the more inconceivable, for in art we find an organic combination of the general and the particular, the logical and the sensuous, the objective and the subjective. "The ideal," writes the Bulgarian scholar Pantelei Zarev, "is an ideological element, historical and subjectively conceptual and aesthetic, which is always present in art's images and manifests itself as 'subjectivity' in them. Art does not merely describe what is objective, but reveals the artist's attitude toward it; art is more than a plastic—or image-form—it also carries an implicit moral, ideological or other evaluation."¹

That is why we cannot agree with Garaudy, who views the artist's ideal as something alien to his art or at least as something unnecessary and incidental. In an address given several years ago at a conference dedicated to the works of Pablo Picasso, Garaudy claimed, "That which makes great works of art worthy of admiration is not the grandeur of the ideal which inspires them; this is not art's concern."²

Centuries of literature have convincingly demonstrated that the artist's ideal as embodied in his works is not a hypothetical or invented category; it is not a tribute to idealistic aesthetics and is not born of dogmatism, but is an *objective law* of art, inseparable from its very nature, from its specific features as a means of artistic cognition and the transformation of reality.

Yes, Pushkin would smile ironically when he heard the fashionable word "ideal", which the epigones of romanticism used in excess at the time. But did not the truly lofty, revolutionary ideal of freedom, the image of Russia

¹ Pantelei Zarev, *Strukturalizem, literaturoznanie, i esteticheski ideal* (Structuralism, Literary Criticism and the Aesthetic Ideal), Sofia, 1969, p. 39.

² *L'Humanité*, Decembre 5, 1963, p. 8.

rising up from deep slumber, light the way for him "like the dawn of captivating joy"? Was it not Pushkin who wrote that "the goal of art is the ideal. . ." ?¹ It is true that Chekhov had an aversion to the sweet, sugary "ideal". But he also said, "The best of them [representatives of the realistic tradition in literature] are realistic and describe life as it is, but because *each of their lines is saturated with a recognition of the goal, as though with sap, besides life as it is you feel life as it should be, and this captivates you*" [italics mine—Y.B.].²

And here is the opinion of still another great Russian writer, an opinion of exceptional value in that it comes from the lips of one whom no one could accuse of idealising life. "Feelings arise," we read in Dostoevsky's notebooks, "only when we come into contact with a higher beauty, with the beauty of the ideal. This contact with the beauty of the ideal can be found in our folk epics as well, and to a strong degree. Here are such astonishing types as Ilya Muromets, the wondrous Svyatogor and others."³

No matter how often our enemies attack the Leninist principles of partisanship and no matter how much they distort it, today life itself irrefutably demonstrates the decisive significance of this extremely important law of art. The truth of Lenin's statement that "one cannot live in society and be free from society",⁴ that celebrated "non-partisanship" is in fact the most hypocritical mask of bourgeois partisanship, that the question "whose side are you on?"—that of the old, outmoded world or the new world to which the future belongs—faces every artist—the truth of all these positions has been specially reinforced in the course of the past several decades, a period characterised by class struggle unprecedented in scale and ferocity, an age of gigantic social battles. The artist's answer to the question posed depends above all on his ideal, what constitutes the goal of his life, what his creative work is devoted to.

¹ A. S. Pushkin, *Collected Works* in ten volumes, Vol. 7, p. 404.

² A. P. Chekhov, *Complete Works and Letters*, Vol. 15, Moscow, 1949, p. 446 (in Russian).

³ *Literaturnaya gazeta*, November 10, 1971.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 48.

Gorky was absolutely right in claiming that art in its essence was a struggle "for" or "against", that art was not and could not be indifferent. Art is always concerned with good and evil, not impassive toward it. To believe otherwise is to surrender oneself to illusions. No matter how specific art is in contrast to other forms of human consciousness, the artistic process is nevertheless inconceivable without taking into account the artist's concern for the end result, for whom he creates, and what cause he serves.

The problem of the artist's ideal is in essence the problem of his place in society, his intimate ties (or the absence thereof) with the people, with the struggle of the working masses.

Soviet writers openly demonstrate the organic merging of their own civic, ethical and aesthetic ideals with the ideals of society. In a bourgeois society these ties are sometimes masked with lofty phrases about "absolute artistic freedom" and artistic "non-alignment". But we know all too well the price one must pay for "absolute freedom" in the capitalist world.

The question of ideals in art is intimately bound up with the battle between ideologies, the struggle for men's minds; the very logic of this struggle lends prominence to this question in our ideological and creative activities.

We should bear in mind, however, that this is not only one of the most topical issues of the day, but also one of the problems in the theory of socialist realism which has received the least attention.

The very nature of the aesthetic ideal accounts for this fact to a certain degree. It must be viewed within a whole complex of fundamental principles of aesthetics the ideological position and party spirit of the artist, the degree to which his moral and aesthetic criteria correspond to those of the people, his conception of beauty, the image of the hero, the truth of life and the truth of art, and so on. The "nodal", complex character of the problem presents serious difficulties for the scholar.

Or, say, the problem of practically applying the concept of the ideal to concrete literary works. Here it is extremely important (but very difficult, as experience has shown) to avoid elements of vulgarisation and rigidity in applying the concept of the ideal to concrete literary practice,

for often a work taken in isolation does not give a full and exact picture of the artist's aesthetic ideal and does not permit a broad elaboration of all the questions connected with this ideal. And finally, one cannot ignore those extraneous elements left over from previously rather widespread vulgar sociological tendencies in the treatment of the problem of the aesthetic ideal; and on the other hand one must not ignore the aesthetic prejudices mentioned earlier.

Naturally all these circumstances complicate the task of those who wish to examine even a few aspects of the aesthetic ideal, but at the same time they lend the problem particular importance and relevance.

If criticism of the vulgar sociological type mentioned the writer's aesthetic ideal at all, it inevitably attempted to relate it to such categories as the psychology of a certain class, the idealisation of reality typical of the ruling class, and so on.

It would be senseless to anathematise once again this vulgar sociological approach which has long since revealed its bankruptcy, were it not for the fact that to this day its echoes are heard in everyday literary life. I am speaking here of those reviews (and they are, alas, not few in number) which, as a rule, represent a strange mixture that includes a rendering of the plot and compliments to the author for defending "lofty ideals" and comments on the work's artistry which completely nullify the essence of the book as a work of art.

People may object that in such cases we are not dealing with a vulgar sociological approach, but rather the most common aesthetic illiteracy. That may be the case. We recalled the vulgar sociological approach because it characteristically isolates the content of a literary work from the criterion of artistry and scorns the latter.

For Marxist Leninist aesthetics there is no rift between the social and aesthetic ideal of the writer, between the artist's civic position and its embodiment in artistic images. In genuine art the concept of the ideal is inseparable from the concept of the beautiful, because for realistic art what is beautiful is that which expresses the most progressive ideal. In our literary criticism these concepts are often taken in isolation, which is one of the

problems discussed in the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On Literary Criticism".

A limited and impoverished conception of the principle of partisanship in art and an underestimation of its *aesthetic* aspect play a significant role here. We somehow tend to forget that partisanship in Soviet literature organically incorporates such concepts as artistry, mastery and aesthetic pleasure. As a keen ideological and political weapon of the Communist Party and a fighter for communist ideals, Soviet literature reveals new beauty and makes it accessible to all the people, opening up new aesthetic vistas to man.

In analysing this problem, which still has not been sufficiently examined by Marxist aesthetics, the Bulgarian scholar A. Atanasov writes in his book *Beauty and Partisanship*, "Some say that when we call revolutionaries, heroes of labour and patriots beautiful men, we have in mind moral rather than aesthetic qualities. But what is aesthetic . . . does not exist in absolutely 'pure' form; it is only a special aspect of reality considered in terms of the subjective and objective qualities and relations inherent to it. Moral, political and social relations have an aesthetic aspect. The moral aspect manifests itself in unique aesthetic form when some weighty essence 'flashes' in the unique behaviour of the individual, his experiences, ideas or dreams, when the progressive meaning of human existence is revealed in one way or another. The highest moral virtue, which we call revolutionary, progressive or communist partisanship, considered in its individual manifestations as a vital stimulus, a burning passion, a unique action accomplished by a unique character, altruism shown by an individual or a group of people—this virtue also appears as an aesthetic phenomenon, as the highest beauty."¹

Atanasov stresses, however, that partisanship becomes an artistic fact only when reality is reflected with the help of genuinely aesthetic means by a genuinely talented artist. No matter how lofty and noble the ideals espoused in a work of art, it cannot accomplish its mission if it does not excite the reader and win him over with its artistry. That

¹ Aleksander Atanasov, *Krasota i partiinost* (Beauty and Partisanship), Sofia, 1970, p. 219.

which is non-artistic cannot convey an ideal to the reader or reveal to him its attractiveness, beauty and nobility. Often, moreover, in spite of the author's intentions, it even discredits this ideal, since the ideological orientation and position of the author can come alive only in genuine artistic images, in the full-blooded realistic depiction of life.

The vulgar sociological approach can do tremendous damage to poetry, especially to lyrical poetry, which is a particularly subtle genre. The danger stems at times from a literal interpretation of the concept of ideology in poetry, and at times from any oversimplified view of the complex process whereby the artist's civic ideal is embodied in the lyric.

Lyrical poetry has always been one of those areas through which in essence unprincipled and élitist theories have tried to worm their way into literature. This issue has its own extended history. Without delving too deep into history, let us consider its treatment in fairly recent times.

The maturing and active uniting of revolutionary forces, the explosive events of 1905, followed by both political terror and reaction in the intellectual field, which did not, however, completely extinguish the flames of revolution—all these things exacerbated the ideological contradictions in literature at the beginning of our century. The question of literature's place in society became a matter of primary concern. Would it curl up in the cozy drawing-room of the respected bourgeois or man the barricades along with the working class? Would it isolate itself from the revolutionary storm and hide in an ivory tower or enter the thick of the struggle on the side of the workers? The question had various shades and nuances, of course, but that was the principal issue.

In Russia numerous literary schools and movements arose whose adherents believed that the artist should remain aloof of the battle (although they did not always say so outright). In their most diverse manifestation and hypostases what was in essence a single aesthetic conception stood out: the artist should distance himself from real life and all its complexity. He is not a fighter, but an inventor of genius. This was a veiled (and sometimes not so veiled) apology for an unprincipled, anti-revolutionary

literature—in other words, a literature *opposed to the people*, even though certain individual representatives of this sort of art sometimes expressed a subjective sympathy for socialism.

Lenin's article "Party Organisation and Party Literature" provoked a storm of confusion in the bourgeois press of all hues and shades. The slogan "partisanship" disturbed not only Filosofov and Berdyaev; Bryusov also came out with an essay in the journal *Vessy* which showed that even the best of bourgeois artists had to travel a difficult and contradictory path before arriving at an understanding of artistic freedom in the Leninist sense of the word.

It is revealing that poetry, and especially lyrical poetry, should have provided the apologists of "absolute artistic freedom" with the freest range for the defence of non-ideological literature, its independence of ideals. Where, if not here, they said, in the cherished world of intimate experiences and feelings, can the poet enjoy his full rights and be his own master, independent of reality and free of life's tiresome influences. How could one require ideology, tendentiousness or service to ideals from the lyricist, who stripped bare his own soul!

The struggle waged by Marxist criticism against such tendencies was of enormous significance; it amounted to a defence of poetry's affinity with the people, a struggle for integrity and civic spirit in poetry.

Unfortunately this struggle later produced certain detrimental effects in the form of a suspicious attitude toward lyrical poetry and an attempt to draw an artificial line between lyrical and civic poetry. Paradoxical as it may seem, those who supported such a distinction actually allied themselves with the apologists of poetry lacking a message, in the sense that they acknowledged the existence of two types of poetry: the sort which served as a weapon in the struggle, and the sort which was limited beforehand to the extolling of birds and the charms of one's beloved, and which was called lyrical poetry.

But the term "lyric" is by no means a synonym for poetry lacking in ideals or content. It is one of three branches of literature, along with the epic and drama. Lyrical poetry may contain or be lacking in ideological

content; it may be suited for the battle-field or the drawing-room; it may or may not fight for the ideals of the people. These things are determined by the artist himself, and not by the genre. To reject the lyric would be to disfigure the living body of poetry and cancel out many of its best examples, denying ourselves one of the most powerful means of affecting man's emotions.

The wrongness of unjustly condemning lyrical poetry as such can also be witnessed in one reaction which such an attitude provokes: that disease of pettiness, that scantiness of thoughts and feelings, that over concern for one's inner world and self-searching analysis which often makes its appearance in lyrical poetry. The protest against rhetoric which sets the teeth on edge, against the ignoring of man's inner world with its infinite spectrum of feelings, sometimes leads to a defence of "pure" lyrical poetry, which in fact amounts to a rejection of its ideological content.

The artist can embody his ideals and express his message in lyrical poetry in the most diverse ways. We can find many examples of exquisite, profoundly lyrical works in which the author forthrightly expresses his attitude toward certain phenomena, passes sentence on them, and thereby conveys the idea of the work directly. In such cases what plays the decisive role is the temperament of a tribune, the poet's force of conviction, his ability to captivate the reader and make him feel as he, the poet, does.

But a significant idea need not be expressed "point blank" in lyrical poetry; it may be expressed indirectly, when the poet reacting to life's experiences suggests certain conclusions to the reader and urges him to make the final judgment.

But a question arises here: are there any *objective* criteria for revealing this sort of contact or spiritual understanding between the poet and the general reader? And where, exactly, would one search for such criteria? Under what conditions do the ideas embodied in a work of art acquire general significance?

When Johann Peter Eckermann asked Goethe what idea he wanted to express in his *Torquato Tasso* the poet responded with surprise, "Idea? How should I know! Before me was Tasso's *life*, and before me was my own life, and when I had brought together the lives of these

two astonishing figures with all their peculiarities, the image of Tasso arose within me; I set Antonio in prosaic contrast to him—there was no lack of models to draw on. . . . In general . . . it is not my manner to try to incorporate something *abstract* in poetry. I perceived *impressions*, sensual impressions, full of life, dear to me, colourful, endlessly diverse, which excited my imagination; and as a poet there was nothing left for me to do but artistically round off and formulate these reflections and impressions and express them in living words in such a way that others reading or listening to what I had depicted received the same impressions.”¹

Naturally one should not conclude from these words that one need not think about ideas at all, that one need only copy facts from reality, various phenomena and human characters, and the idea will of its own accord arise. That would be too primitive an interpretation of Goethe’s words. On the basis of his artistic experience the great poet actually formulated (maybe instinctively) the principle of realistic art, which does not proceed from an abstract ideal, but rather discloses this ideal in reality itself, in the life around us.

It is also important to note that Goethe attributes tremendous significance to the poet’s personality; “my own life” is for Goethe a necessary component of the creative process. Impressions (“sensuous, full of life, dear to me, colourful, endlessly diverse”) pass through his being and are perceived by it before they are embodied in images.

We discovered a similar idea in Dobrolyubov’s diary, where the critic carries on a conversation with his fellow-lodger, the student philologist Alexandrovich, “about pure and didactic tendencies in art”. “Alexandrovich,” writes Dobrolyubov, “is for didacticism, but he is still troubled by the thought that didacticism as such makes a poetic work dead and withered and cold. While recognising this fact, he does not know where to turn or what to settle on.”² The critic helps his friend resolve this dilemma by

¹ J. P. Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, Leipzig, 1968, S. 569, 570.

² N. A. Dobrolyubov, *Complete Works* in six volumes, Vol. 6, Moscow, 1939, p. 458 (in Russian).

stressing the role of the artist's personality,' accentuating that "didacticism" must run through the whole "nature of the poet" and be transformed into his own "instinctive feeling of good and evil".

This approach makes it perfectly clear how vitally important the artist's personality is in its scope, its ability to "absorb" something of that which goes beyond the narrow framework of the individual, its degree of participation in the intellectual life of the people.

Where one has reason to speak of the *merger of the artist's ideal with the ideals of the people*, where the poet, in expressing his own thoughts, feelings and aspirations and establishing his own aesthetic views, expresses the hopes and aspirations of the people, their conception of the beautiful—there we can find that quality in a lyrical work which may be defined as *affinity with the people*.

The category of the aesthetic ideal arises at the intersection, or rather the interweaving, of such concepts as the social ideal of the artist and his concept of the beautiful.

The province of the beautiful has always been an arena of keen ideological and aesthetic struggle, a struggle between idealistic aesthetic concepts and the principles of realistic art, which does not search for beauty in the ethereal sphere, but rather seeks to discover it in reality, in the life of the people.

"Someone suddenly uttered the word 'beauty'. Somehow it gave everyone a start," wrote Maxim Rylsky in one of his works. "We really seemed to have forgotten the word, forgotten that novels, poems, musical works, paintings and sculptures which express the advanced ideas of their age and serve the people *must be beautiful*. Thus began a heated discussion of beauty. We were happy when we recalled Marx's words, that man creates according to the laws of beauty."¹

The revolutionary changes of the past several decades, the profound *aesthetic* charge of the accomplishments of the Soviet people, their struggle in building communism, the birth of a new, *harmonious* man—all these things uncovered truly inexhaustible "deposits" of beauty for socialist realism.

¹ Maxim Rylsky, *Nasha krovna sprava. Statki pro literaturu* (Our Cause. Articles on Literature), Kiev, 1959, p. 11.

For the Soviet writer the object of art is the beautiful, and he finds it in life. Soviet men and women, their heroic labour and accomplishments, the struggle for the transformation of reality, the transformation of man himself in the course of this struggle, his spiritual enrichment and moral development—the artist finds poetry and beauty wherever he turns. But he does not embellish reality. A characteristic feature of his world outlook is a keen sensitivity to *what is beautiful in reality*, its bright colours and immeasurable wealth. That is why an affirmation of the beauty of the new world becomes the principal theme of even those works that deal primarily with everyday material, the lives of ordinary working people.

In recent years the theme of contemporary life has occupied a prominent position in our discussions and reflections about literature. And that is only natural. Face to face with the present, every writer should think about his "place in the ranks", how well he keeps pace with the people. This is an objective law of literature's development, for literature has always been nourished by the ideas of the age. It is easy to understand why Soviet writers are so eager to debate the ways and forms in which our literature is related to the present, the active role of art in the life and struggle of the people.

One is struck by the fact, however, that one important aspect of this problem is often ignored. In examining literature's ties with the present, with the ongoing life of the people, critics speak primarily of its *duty* to society, its role in educating people and transforming their lives. We tend to forget that this aspect of the problem cannot be divorced from another, namely, *the aesthetic content of the very concept of the present*.

In defending literature's tendency to become closely related to the present day, we should stress what tremendous aesthetic possibilities, what unbelievable wealth our life opens up to the artist in the province of beauty. It would be a mistake to assume that only society gains from the connections between literature and society. They are even more necessary for literature itself, for whom such ties are literally a matter of life and death, lending it full ideological and aesthetic value. In an address entitled "The Writer and the Present" delivered in 1939 at the opening of a series of conference courses for Russian Federation

writers, Alexander Fadeyev quite rightly pointed to the organic, indissoluble bond between the artist's striving "for the beautiful, for perfection", and his desire to "convey that which is greatest, most typical and most important in the present".¹ The artist's search for beauty and his ties with modern life are two aspects of one process.

Here there is yet another essential factor that ought to be considered.

The artistic practice and creative experience of Soviet literature suggest that there are certain shortcomings and inaccuracies in our theories concerning the aesthetic ideal. For example, there is a tendency to associate the category of the aesthetic ideal primarily, and sometimes exclusively, with the claim that only *what ought to be is beautiful*.

This position reveals a desire to interpret the aesthetic ideal as something which belongs only to the future, a beautiful dream; objective, historically grounded prerequisites exist for the fulfilment of this dream, but they are nonetheless merely prerequisites. The conclusion is that in reflecting life as it is, the realist writer must "pose the question" of how life should be. Not discover, or see, or support it in life, but merely "pose the question".

Naturally the assertion that the beautiful is that which ought to be is one of the most important functions of realistic literature. As for Soviet literature, it grew and matured and has won world-wide recognition precisely because its best exponents have revealed the profound aesthetic message of the socialist revolution and shown that the birth of the new world is a victory for the new vision of beauty. But this is in no way opposed to another extremely important feature of socialist realism in literature, namely, that it discovers what is beautiful *in reality* and finds the aesthetic ideal embodied in today's heroes and their deeds. "Man needs an ideal, but a human ideal corresponding to nature and not a supernatural ideal. . . ." ² wrote Lenin.

On the other hand scholars are right in objecting to another extreme—treating the ideal in an ordinary, mundane manner as merely the best of what has been accomplished.

¹ A. Fadeyev, *Za tridtsat let. Izbrannye statyi, rechi i pisma o literature i iskusstve* (Thirty Years: Selected Essays, Speeches and Letters on Literature and Art), Moscow, 1957, p. 216.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 75.

The factor of the future, the search for tomorrow, dynamics and prospects of development—all these things are missing in treatments of this sort, impoverishing the concept of the ideal.

One-sidedness of any sort is harmful here. What is necessary is a dialectical approach, particularly the sort we find expressed in Herzen's words about a "transformed contemplation of the present". "It goes without saying," he wrote in *Dilettantism in Science*, "that the fuller and more all-embracing the present, the more true and universal its ideal."¹

The Soviet artist manifests his aesthetic ideal by extolling the beauty and attractiveness of our dream, our goal, and by affirming the beautiful as something that is due to be and is. Drawn to life as it should and will be, our literature also lives in the present, searching for and finding the embodiment of the aesthetic ideal in the world around, in the labour and struggle of the people.

III

Even when the writer's "ideal" is reduced to the absence of any ideal whatsoever (which can happen), he finds it difficult to shelter the ideal from stormy, refreshing reality. But when the artist *consciously* renders service to the ideal, he naturally and inevitably becomes a fighter.

The dialectics of this process in any given artistic method is one of the most complex aesthetic problems; it is not only of theoretical importance, but, as experience has shown, of practical artistic significance as well. We are dealing, after all, with literature's place in society, in the life of the people, its role in social progress.

The literature of socialist realism is deeply rooted in the life of the people; it is organically connected with the strivings and accomplishments and ideals of the masses. That is why it has been able in its best works to embody the truth of our age with impressive artistic force.

Artistic truth—for literature it is indeed a fundamental issue, an issue of life and death. Marxist-Leninist aesthetics

¹ A. I. Herzen, *Works* in nine volumes, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1955, p. 89 (in Russian).

views the truthful depiction of reality as a necessary prerequisite and essential feature of literature that is genuinely close to the people.

As we know one of the most widely played "trumps" in the propagandistic arsenal of our literature's opponents is the reproach that socialist realism allegedly does not believe truth to be a necessary condition of the artistic reflection of life, that one of the prerequisites to serving the socialist ideal is the inevitable distortion of the truth and that the writer is urged to show life, not as it is, but as he would like it to be. Thus the American "specialist on scientific communism" Alfred Meyer, author of *The Soviet Political System. An Interpretation*, writes: "In Soviet art and entertainment, the good guys always win. The ending always is happy. The concluding note inevitably is one of triumph and optimism."¹

The absurdity and groundlessness of such statements can be most clearly seen when we apply them to the diverse artistic experience of the literature of socialist realism. This experience shows that socialist realism's strength lies precisely in the great leeway it provides for the reflection of life's truth and the writer's practically speaking unlimited freedom to choose themes, problems, subjects and to make artistic resolutions. Soviet literature has no "forbidden" areas. It accepts the lofty, the comic, the joyful and the tragic, the most glaring contradictions and the most transparent clarity.

In other words we are not speaking of whether or not to write the truth; for this dilemma does not confront Soviet writers. Veracity is the elementary, basic requirement of the socialist realist aesthetic. The heart of the matter lies in the writer's quest for an ideal that illuminates the *path toward truth*, where the writer summons his readers and what conclusions he asks them to draw.

Thus we come to the question of the writer's *position* where his aesthetic ideal is expressed, the question of the social content of that ideal, its ties to the people's conceptions of what in life is beautiful and what is ugly, what belongs to the past and what to the future. Only on this level can the problem of artistic truth be resolved in the art of

¹ Alfred G. Meyer, *The Soviet Political System. An Interpretation*, New York, 1965, pp. 346-47.

socialist realism; only such an approach can reveal the profound relation of this problem to the principle that literature should be close to the people.

It is no secret that sometimes truth is seen as an absolute, an abstract category indifferent to the cause that led the artist to take pen in hand. Any attempt to approach the truth from the criteria of class or partisanship is seen by advocates of this viewpoint as vulgarisation, "contradicting" to the essence of art.

What can we say on this subject? We reject the pragmatic, tergiversating interpretation of truth as whatever is profitable and useful at the moment. The theory of the "plurality of truths" is not a Marxist one; no one would quarrel with that. But we do quarrel with another contention. We believe that truth "in general" does not exist, that truth in art allegedly independent of subjective evaluations, beyond the individual, class positions and views cannot stand up to criticism from the viewpoint of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics.

The fact is that truth is both objective and subjective and includes both facts and their evaluation. The artist is not an indifferent registrar, but an investigator of life; he analyses real phenomena and makes generalisations, passing his aesthetic sentence on them. But there are different ways of affirming or negating things; everything depends on the artist's world view, his position, the ideal that inspires him. The struggle for that ideal, the "illumination" of facts and phenomena by its light are the concrete expression of the writer's partisanship and accordingly of his work's affinity with the people; for these concepts are inseparable.

The artificial separation of life's truth from partisanship and the writer's ideological position and an illusory objectivity are alien to socialist realism for experience shows that they lead to the distortion of truth, one-sidedness. "Non partisan" truth remote from public aesthetic ideals is a betrayal of realism, a capitulation to naturalism, which, in the end, means giving up truth altogether.

Only Leninist party spirit provides the artist with a true key to the attainment of life's genuine truth, a truth which is alien to naturalism and subjective caprice, to idyllic embellishments, as well as the deliberate intensification of dark colours.

In art we are concerned not only with *what is depicted* and *how* it is depicted, but also *in what cause* it is depicted. Each artist must answer this question himself guided by his own convictions, his civic conscience, his sense of responsibility and, as we at times avoid mentioning, his political and class conceptions.

The active evaluation of the object being depicted inherent to the nature of art in general acquires special meaning in the aesthetics of socialist realism. The artist who consciously places his art at the service of the people and party judges reality from the position of the socialist ideal and it is precisely this position that helps him reveal through his art the most essential aspects of the people's life in all their depth and complexity.

Meditating on truth in art, on the fact that it should not "be betrayed . . . in any way", Dovzhenko noted in his diary that, "it should be elevated and carried in the very heart".¹ This lofty truth gives the artist a "clear vision" of the world. If the artist has this vision his aesthetic ideal will not contradict the truth of the people's life, no matter how harsh it may be. Even when he depicts the ugliest phenomena, those most alien to our society, exposing obstacles to our progress, he does this while bearing in mind the affirmation of the beautiful, the struggle for the beautiful. What is decisive in the final analysis is the profundity of the artist's comprehension of the main tendencies of social development, the people's life, the clarity of his ideological position and the loftiness of his aesthetic ideal.

The literature of socialist realism has always been based on this principle and always shall be. Only our ideological enemies or those near-sighted persons who do not trouble themselves to ponder the essence of phenomena can connect the aesthetic ideal of Soviet literature, its partisanship, with such concepts as a departure from life's truth, varnishing reality, or distortion.

How right A. Ovcharenko was when he replied to Professor Ernest J. Simmons to stress that Soviet literature's dedication to socialist ideals, and its partisanship, not only do not exclude, but presuppose "the greatest objectivity, the most fearless attitude to life, the most sober view

¹ A. Dovzhenko, *Works* in four volumes, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1968, p. 695 (in Russian).

of the world". "It [partisanship] is based on these principles," writes A. Ovcharenko, "and, if you like, in our sphere it demands, yes, demands, that the world be depicted in all its complexity, confusion, contradictions, and in the struggle and resolution of these contradictions."¹

Was Sholokhov conflicting with our ideals, and not writing in their name, when he told of Andrei Sokolov's dramatic fate? Does not Yuri Bondarev's *The Hot Snow* return again and again to the tragic war years in the name of this ideal? And cannot the same be said of Konstantin Simonov's war trilogy (*The Living and the Dead*, *Soldiers Are not Born* and *Last Summer*), of Alexander Chakovsky's *Blockade*, Oles Honchar's *The Cyclone*, Ivan Stadnyuk's *War* and Victor Astafyev's *Shepherd and Shepherdess*? Did not Fyodor Abramov's novel *Two Winters and Three Summers*, Jonas Avizius' *The Village at the Crossroads*, Sergei Krutinin's *The Lipyags*, Anatoly Ivanov's *Eternal Call*, and Vassili Belov's *A Familiar Affair* tell of the Soviet countryside in various stages of its history with this goal in mind?

Do not the writers of the best works on modern life turn to the most complex, tense social and moral conflicts in the name of this ideal?

On the other hand sharp criticism cannot be a goal in itself for an artist. To accurately, that is from a position of true affinity with the people (for truth and affinity with the people are inseparable), reflect reality the artist must not only show its complexity and contradictions, but the main tendency in its development as well. This means he must reveal that within reality which determines the great attractive force of the ideal. This feature of socialist realist literature is what D. Starikov has in mind when he speaks in a broad, general sense of "Furmanov's school"² with its uncompromising, sober analytical approach, and its extraordinary responsiveness to "any reality", as Lunacharsky noted, including harsh, unattractive, even cruel reality and at the same time its ability to retain its orientation amidst a chaos

¹ A. Ovcharenko, "Jeshche o sotsialisticheskoy literature i teoreticheskikh osnovakh sotsialisticheskogo realizma" (Once More on Socialist Literature and the Theoretical Bases of Socialist Realism), *Inostrannaya literatura*, No. 7, 1970, p. 217.

² D. Starikov, *Svyaz vremen* (Time's Juncture), Moscow, 1970, p. 336.

of impressions, "to avoid surrendering itself to the mercies of reality".¹

At times the author takes a sort of snapshot of facts and phenomena that he has encountered, grasping at things that lie on the surface and believing that he has not sinned against the truth for everything that he has written is not imagined, but drawn from life.

But the process of the reflection of life's truth is far from a simple one. Life is complex, multifaceted, contradictory; the essence of phenomena rarely, as it were, appears in pure form. If one had merely to put what he sees around him to paper in order to create a truthful picture of life, we would in all probability have no false, artificial works. For in the end each artist (if he is honest, that is) strives for truth.

No, you can't get off with a simple recording, a snapshot. This process inevitably involves an all-round analysis of reality within certain philosophical positions; the thoughtful correlation, juxtaposition of phenomena and facts with other phenomena and facts; the ability to take out the main, leading tendencies from the stream of events and to foresee their perspective and direction. Naturally it also involves the artist's purposeful selection of real phenomena, subjects, material and form. Art by its very nature is *selective*!

For non-Marxist aesthetics only one single aspect of this problem exists: the *right* of the artist to choose. In practice this is turned around to imply the right *not to choose anything*, to throw everything that strikes the eye into the work. This is the basis of "art-vérité", which shows its poverty, rather than its wealth, its artistic insolvency. "Behind the demands for freedom to write 'what I want' 'the way I want to'," notes N. Shamota, "one divines the wish to write 'of what I can' 'in any way that I can'."²

Genuine creative freedom, as Marxist-Leninist aesthetics sees it, is based, not only on the artist's *right* to choose, but on his *obligation* to choose. This is not an obligation that is easy to fulfil, for it requires experience, a profound knowledge of life, a wealth of observations, talent, artistic acumen and mastery. And of course the artist must have a

¹ A. V. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works* in eight volumes, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1964, pp. 324-25 (in Russian).

² N. Shamota, *O svobode tvorchestva* (Creative Freedom), Moscow, 1966, p. 124.

clear world view. This and only this is the true way to portraying life as it is. Those who interpret creative freedom as the freedom to flaunt the laws of art, the artist's obligations, and sees his calling merely in the dispassionate recording of facts, phenomena, events and impressions has not the slightest chance to approach life's truth.

In principle modernism is orientated to a fragmentary, chaotic picture of the world, to the recording of untypical events and chance relations between them. It must be said that even in our literature in not-so-distant years there was a noticeable attraction on the part of some writers, particularly young writers, to fashionable essays, fragments, sketches which lacked the "logic of facts, the chemistry of deeds" (Gorky) and constituted nothing more than superficial portraits, minor observations and foggy allusions. Apologists of this "sub literature", to put it delicately, love to remind us that each author is free to choose his point of view on reality and, all the more, to choose a genre. This is true, but it should not be forgotten that this is only the first, most elementary degree of his freedom to create. Apart from the laws of genre, of capricious artistic fantasy, there is the most lofty law of art—the law that one must be true to life. Genuine freedom is unthinkable for the artist if he cannot organically fuse his vision of the world with the objective truths of that world.

Yes, a dewdrop can reflect the sun, but only under one condition that the true artist set out to deal with the issue. What does this tell us? Only that the in-depth depiction of reality is not a quantitative category and is not directly dependent on a mechanically measured concept of the broadness of the narrative framework. Neither geography, chronology, or the number of characters determines the fullness of the depiction of reality, but the author's position, the artist's ability to show the dynamics of life, the tendencies of its development, the complex interrelations between phenomena. An epic may be oppressive in the narrowness of its approach to reality, while one story may, at times, be able to accommodate, not only the fate of one man, but the path of an entire people and the face of an epoch.

We are not saying that an artist is obliged to reflect life in all its integrity and fullness in one work. Any critic who demands this is not being realistic. But the writer cannot

lose his sense of this integrity, this fullness, his sense of the vital complex bonds between an individual fact or phenomenon and the general course of life, his sense of the perspective of this course. No matter how localised or limited a reality he may depict, no matter what genre he may have chosen, he has not the right to lose this sense. This guarantees genuine, not superficial, veracity in work; this is the measure of an artist's partisanship, his affinity with the people and his faithfulness to life's truth.

Recently in our country much has been said about the need to increase the analytical, scholarly principle in literature, the need to probe deeper into life processes. There has, however, been a tendency to see the essence of this process as primarily consisting of a stress on the dark, negative sides of the people's life. In such cases the concept of truth is bound above all, if not exclusively, to the critical zeal of literature, to "exposés", to the painting of all horrors and ugly aspects of life, the collection of moral abnormalities, among others. Literature was made into an apparatus that signals the divergence from various norms in the activities of the social organism.

It is instructive to follow the logic of people who take this approach, for example, take F. Svetov's article "Down-to-Earth Literature".¹ We will not deal with the critic's opinions or arguments and with the article as a whole but will touch upon its last section, to be precise, one paragraph which we will first quote in full.

"Perhaps," writes F. Svetov, "literature has no more need to concern itself with serious problems, tragedies, the posing of questions and the search for answers, or the struggle against lies. How much more pleasant to read a story or novel about heroes who are remarkable in all respects, fearless knights beyond reproach—and only about them. But still the writer who makes a profound, merciless analysis of the 'negative' things in our life, and their origins, fearlessly tracing their relations in the real world, deserves, at least, our attention. Naturally with such a companion we cannot be distracted or pass the time in sweet oblivion, nor can we be carried away by vivid, pleasant 'details'. But we do come away from such a discussion armed with a knowledge of the subject that helps us to

¹ *Novy mir*, No. 7, 1966.

understand the essence of the phenomenon for ourselves and wakes our slumbering sense of morality without permitting it to fall asleep again. . . ."

This extensive quotation is necessary if we are to grasp the development of the critic's reasoning, the turns of thought that lead, in the end, to a very characteristic conclusion.

We are faced with a dilemma: either thoughtless, amusing pseudo-literature which only lulls us and helps us to pass the time, or a literature concerned with serious problems, "the posing of questions and the search for answers". By the way F. Svetov believes that one of the essential features of literature of the first kind, i.e., empty, varnished books is the presence of a positive hero (heroes, the critic ironically remarks, "who are remarkable in all respects"), but here we are not speaking of this.

Either-or. There is no third option. Either you are for cake without conflict, or the black bread of militant civic literature. Can there be any doubt what choice the thoughtful reader will make when the question is posed in *this* fashion?

This is the basis of Svetov's reasoning. Further on his thoughts take a subtle, but essential turn. His winning thesis about a civic literature undergoes a curious metamorphosis. In the heat of our just outrage at lulling belles lettres without conflict we do not immediately perceive the substitution of one concept for another; in fact the critic no longer speaks of a literature "concerned with serious problems", but of one that undertakes "a profound, merciless" analysis of the nature and origins of "negative" things (it is difficult to tell what the author's ironical quotation marks mean here) in our life, the "fearless" tracing of their relations in the real world.

True, the critic stipulates that such literature "deserves, at least, our attention", but once again another curve in his train of thought cancels this cautious reservation. Svetov explains that he means literature whose subject is "the negative", and whose method is above all characterised by "mercilessness", for he believes that only such a literature is capable of arming the reader with "a knowledge of the subject", of helping him to understand "the essence of the phenomenon". What is "knowledge of the subject", and "the essence of the phenomenon" if not the *truth* about this

subject and that phenomenon, truth, whose artistic comprehension is the goal of creation?

The logical circle closes in upon itself. A depiction of life's truth and attention focused primarily on the dark sides of reality are placed in direct interdependence.

It would be somewhat strange to deny that the criticism of the faults and darker aspects of our development is the lawful function of art in its capacity as a specific form of the cognition and transformation of reality. Insofar as the art of socialist realism is concerned, the roots of this function can be found in Marxist philosophy which is basically a critical, revolutionary philosophy directed at the active transformation and perfection of the world. But any art, especially the art of socialist realism, cannot by its very nature limit itself *exclusively* to this function. Its task is to show reality on a broader scope, in all its wealth and diversity, not only to negate, but to affirm, not only to signal the disease, but to help cure it. If we cease to depict the main direction of our development we will be deliberately restricting our picture of the people's life and presenting it in a one-sided manner, thereby departing from the truth.

The relation between truth and "exposé" is similar to that between, say, truth and "the theory of lack of conflict". Works written according to that theory were not entirely false; they reflected a dole of truth about our reality, but only a dole. Real life, with its complex conflicts and drama, its human fates that are far from simple and the postwar difficulties remained on the sidelines. "Merciless" realism also, as a rule, does not lie. Its supporters have some basis for contending, "That's how it really was". But not to lie does not mean to speak the truth, particularly in art. Concentrating exclusively on the shady sides of life, abnormalities and abuses, "merciless" literature at its best reveals only a part of the truth about reality.

Lenin's thoughts on the epistemological roots of various sorts of subjective deviations and distortions in the process of human cognition are of great methodological importance if we are to understand such phenomena. Writes Lenin, "Human knowledge is not . . . a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates a series of circles, a spiral. Any fragment, segment, section of this curve can be transformed (transformed one-sidedly) into an independent,

complete, straight line, which then (if one does not see the wood for the trees) leads into the quagmire. . . ."¹ In art such a "straightening" entails one-sidedness, "woodenness" and "ossification", subjectivism and subjective blindness of which Lenin speaks. Naturally there can be no question of the *full* truth in such cases. Moreover, *untruths* arise.

"A one-sided view of a subject always leads to false conclusions," warned Belinsky in *Thoughts and Notes on Russian Literature*, "although this view may not be devoid of profundity and perspicacity."² Some of the more talented, honest books written in the spirit of "harsh" realism are not lacking in "profundity and perspicacity", in the sense that their authors probe deep-lying strata of life's material and keenly mark aspects of these strata that were for various reasons outside literature's field of vision before their works. Therein lies their strength. But it turns into a weakness when the artist remains on this elementary stage, when the shadowy aspects of life and negative phenomena are presented in deliberate isolation from other aspects and phenomena. Then we see a one-sided view which inevitably impoverishes literature and narrows its possibilities, for the genuine calling of literature is not merely to "signal" faults, but to *grasp* life; this is inseparable from active influence, from the *transformative function* of literature.

V. Novikov argues with the representatives of "exposition" in *Artistic Truth and the Dialectics of Creation*. "The view that in the period of full-scale communist construction art's primary role is to locate and give off signals of trouble, to correct the general direction of social development by showing negative facts is, in my opinion, wrong in principle," writes Novikov, in particular referring to G. Kunitsyn's article "Art and Politics".³

True, I am not entirely convinced by Novikov's thesis that "in the epoch of communist construction art's first task is to affirm its positive aspects and poeticise its beauty and grandeur".⁴ Such a formulation and the very question of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 363.

² V. G. Belinsky, *Works* in three volumes, Vol. 3, p. 55.

³ See *Iskusstvo kino*, No. 4, 1968.

⁴ V. Novikov, *Khudozhestvennaya pravda i dialektika tvorchestva* (*Artistic Truth and the Dialectics of Creation*), Moscow, 1971, pp. 386-88.

the "order" of art's tasks may lead us to replace one extreme with another which does not correspond with the author's intent or the message of his work. It appears the principle of diversity, of giving the complete picture of reality while striving (and being able) to capture the dynamics of the developing world, its historical meaning and vital content, to comprehend and reflect its real proportions are closer to the dialectic of life and art. K. Fedin wrote rather eloquently in this regard, "Without a combination of light and shadow," he explained to one reader, "art does not exist. Everyone appears to be aware of this, but we find it too easy to forget that no shadow can exist in art (as in nature) without a source of light."

One of the primary conditions of truth in art is the perception and comprehension of light and shadow in life.

The tendency to identify truth with negative zeal, with a passion for "exposé" is rooted above all in a distorted notion of the role of literature in the life of the people and in society. At times it is implied that literature, first and foremost, without looking back, castigates vices and, so to speak, agitates society, not allowing it to stagnate and thereby facilitating progress. The writer is seen as a prophet, a messiah, one of the few, if not the only, fighter for the interests of the masses who stands outside, or to be more precise, above politics. It is maintained that the writer sees farther and deeper, feels more keenly and has a better understanding of life than anyone else; that he is closer to the people, has a better knowledge of its needs and concerns and is accordingly the primary, direct spokesman for the people's interests. Such a treatment of literature's affinity with the people reflects existing tendency to exaggerate non-political factors in the development of society today, for example, technocratic attitudes.

We would like to stress that while illusions connected with the messianic calling of literature seem opposed to the utilitarian, vulgar-political approach to art, in fact they are essentially quite similar. If we reflect on the matter, the view of literature as the handmaiden of politics and the image of the writer as messiah are rooted in nothing other than the distorted, primitive notion of literature's influence on social life, a notion far from Marxism.

We see literature as a vital sphere in society's intellectual life, as a powerful and in its own right indispensable weapon in the ideological struggle; it performs these functions by its own specific means, contributing to the ideological, moral and aesthetic education of the new man, the formation of a harmonious individual. In this sense the civic role played by literature in our society is hard to overestimate. But the Soviet intelligentsia's activities are guided, not by a sense of its own exceptional qualities or by pretensions to some exclusive position in society, but above all by its efforts to serve the people and a sense of its organic participation in communist construction.

Most important is the genuine organic fusion of civic responsibility and partisan purposefulness on the part of the writer with civic, creative initiative which, in the end, is dictated by the interests of the same politics of a socialist society, perceived in a broad, non-pragmatic sense and not in the spirit of thoughtless execution.

Speaking of those aspects of the principle of affinity with the people related to the concepts of the aesthetic ideal and artistic truth we cannot avoid a brief discussion of the problem of romanticism in literature, the relation of reality and dream, of what is and what should be.

Shortly after the war in a discussion of A. Fadeyev's *The Young Guard* certain critics on the whole quite rightly objected to attempts to declare so-called "neo-romanticism" to be the universal path of Soviet literature (and such attempts were, in fact, made), they expressed their fears that the gravitation toward romanticism might be related to an unconscious desire to somehow avoid real contradictions, to "outwit" life's truth.

Their fears reflected a characteristic tendency to view the rejection of romanticism as a panacea for lack of conflict and varnished truths, as the prerequisite for realism. The reasoning is roughly as follows: if advocates of romanticism strive to reveal the beautiful as something that *should* be in our life and, most importantly, *is* in our life, does this not lead them to lend life false colours, to artificially draw it towards their aesthetic ideal? Does it not follow that they are varnishing the truth, overemphasising its most attractive aspects and accordingly separating literature from the complex, dramatic life of the people? Is

this not, then, the primary feature of romantic literature?¹

In his essay "On Romantic Poetry",² critic V. Ognev wrote of A. Dovzhenko and S. Vurgun that both artists "looked above the heads", true, "above the heads of insignificant people because they did not expect any great danger from them". Naturally enough the critic sees this as a serious weakness in their aesthetic stand, but finds it possible to acknowledge that "the artist-knights are worthy of respect... for their goals were noble and humane".

We are offered the legend of a romantic artist as a man of subjective honour and sincerity, but one who is eccentric, removed from the course of events and looks "over men's heads", a Don Quixote who deserves our indulgence. . . . Whether the critic meant it or not the works of artists like Dovzhenko and Vurgun are somehow separated from the main direction in the development of the art of socialist realism; romantic art turns out to be second rate art.

The legend of romantic Don Quixotes is one manifestation of the distrust and prejudice with regard to romanticism that we still encounter in our literary life and which, as I see it, could be characterised as a sign of aesthetic narrow-mindedness and overemphasis on norms.

In fact it seems that as soon as someone mentions artistic superficiality in a work, departures from life's truth, stilted characters, unnatural feelings and violation of the logic of characters, we hear cries of, "Romanticism!". From this perspective critic I. Solovyova attributed all the drawbacks in Y. Kazakov's prose to "a falsetto note of romanticism". One may and perhaps should reproach Kazakov for many things, but the "sins" of romanticism

¹ Interestingly enough at one time the romantic principle and romanticism as such was viewed by some of our critics as having diametrically opposed tendencies, as related to sermons of despondency, gloomy pessimism, lack of faith, etc. See for example, I. Grossman-Roshchin's "Theses on Decadence in Literature", in *Na literaturnom postu*, No. 1, 1927.

² *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 14, 1961. See also his *U karty poezii. Statyi i ocherki o poezii natsionalnykh respublik* (The Map of Poetry. Essays on the Poetry of the National Republics), Moscow, 1968.

could never be held against him. Solovyova was justified in commenting on the falsely poetic, laboured prose of such stories as "Nikita's Secrets", or "The Antlers"; some of his novellas are in fact irritating for their artificial, stylised *skaz* narration, the presence of all sorts of elves in old-fashioned costumes and other pseudo-romantic attributes. But what does this have to do with romanticism? Should we not call things by their proper names and speak of ordinary second-rate writing?

At a scientific session on socialist realism critic V. Lakshin attempted to give theoretical foundation to the view that the romantic principle is an obstacle to the further development of realism. Lakshin feels that the romantic movement which engendered many talented works in the twenties and thirties became obsolete long ago and does not correspond to the analytical, sober spirit of the times. Despite reservations about the difference between "true" and "superficial" romanticism, Lakshin's speech was, on the whole, marked by clearly expressed anti-romanticism. In the end, the critic relates such sins of modern literature as "romantic ecstasy", "self-satisfied bragging", and "choking rhetoric" to romanticism.¹

There is no need to give a survey of the numerous "anti-romantic" comments and conceptions. I will merely note that among the active opponents of romanticism are very authoritative critics who see it as a manifestation of an idealistic world outlook. A. Upits, for example, in a book on socialist realism remarked that romanticism is not only unnecessary in our literature, but is even harmful to the accurate depiction of reality, that it distracts the writer from the life of the people.²

We should, no doubt, seek the resolution of this problem in life itself, in the regular manifestations of artistic practice. The considerable experience of Soviet literature has made substantial corrections in the conception of romanticism; the essential contradiction between dream and reality, between romantic zeal and life's truth, has been re-

¹ See *Aktualnye problemy sotsialisticheskogo realizma* (Current Problems of Socialist Realism), Moscow, 1969.

² See A. Upits, *Voprosy sotsialisticheskogo realizma v literature* (Questions of Socialist Realism in Literature), Riga, 1959.

solved. The old academic notion of romanticism as something removed from life, incompatible with harsh, everyday reality, became an anachronism long ago.

The strength of socialist realist literature as opposed to the literature of the past lies primarily in the fact that it depicts the world in its historical movement forward; that this literature strives to depict the future; that it manages to see and reveal new features and perspectives in the surrounding reality. "In this sense," stressed A. Fadeyev, "socialist realism includes revolutionary romanticism, that is, the revolutionary dream of the future that relies on real development."¹ The source of the strength and advantages of socialist realist literature is the people's life, the labour of Soviet people.

For this reason romanticism does not contradict our literature's affinity with the people, but, on the contrary, is closely bound to it. We might say that without the romanticism that lies *at the very heart of the people's life* it would be impossible to accurately depict that life.²

Returning to the earlier discussed legend of Don Quixotes we should firmly state that neither Dovzhenko, nor Vurgun, nor romanticism as a whole need our indulgence. It would be ridiculous to "justify" them. The attentive, unprejudiced scholar inevitably realises that the "theory of lack of conflict" was neither exclusively, nor even predominantly expressed in works of a romantic hue, that often the authors of books that were apparently absolutely realistic presented their readers with sugar plums rather than well-kneaded truth. And in general one can hardly take seriously attempts to seek the roots of so complex a social-spiritual phenomenon as the "theory of lack of conflict" in the sphere of a literary manner or style.

All socialist realist literature requires that the author write the truth, give a total, complex picture of life, show

¹ A. Fadeyev, *Za tridtsat let* (Thirty Years), p. 110.

² We should note that in recent years the problems of revolutionary romanticism and romantic style have become central issues in literary discussions; without going into detail, I refer the reader to the works of L. Novichenko, A. Ovcharenko, A. Elyashevich, L. Yegorova, E. Lyubareva and others. I will also refer to my own book, *Dovzhenko. Nekotorye voprosy estetiki i poetiki* (Dovzhenko: Aesthetics and Poetics), Moscow, 1968.

new progressive tendencies of the development of society in the struggle of contradictions and at the same time struggle against everything that is old and backward. No genre or stylistic movement can free the artist from this obligation.

Insofar as romanticism is concerned it is a grave mistake to believe that romance gives art a right to reject the principle of a complex, accurate depiction of life. This illusory "right" is the basis of the conception of "revolutionary romanticism" advocated by certain Chinese literary critics. Commenting on the essence of this conception, its advocates stress that in works of literature and art life should be depicted as "loftier", more "vivid", more "ideal" than ordinary reality. As far back as May of 1942 at a conference on literature and art in Yangyuan participants expressed the idea that "revolutionary romanticism" means, on the one hand, intensive "glorification of the bright aspects of the proletariat", and, on the other hand, accentuation of "dark aspects of the bourgeoisie". Attempts were made to refer to Soviet literature and art as allegedly depicting "primarily the bright side" during the period of socialist construction.

The entire experience of Soviet art demonstrates the fact that such references have not the slightest foundation and that such a flat, schematic interpretation of "revolutionary romanticism" is far from the aesthetics of socialist realism, from *our* conceptions of romanticism and the romantic. Roger Garaudy's attempts to demonstrate in his book *The Chinese Problem* that principles supposedly characteristic of socialist realism were developed at Yangyuan are absurd.¹ Garaudy's evaluation of socialist realism is no surprise; in recent years he has written even worse things in this vein. Elementary objectivity, however, requires that a critic differentiate between phenomena which not only have no relation, but are poles apart in meaning.

In socialist realist art romanticism and realism comprise a single ideological-aesthetic alloy, a new artistic quality in principle; romanticism does not sever art's ties to the earth and realism does not weigh down creative inspiration or prevent us from seeing life in all its dynamics.

¹ See Roger Garaudy, *Le problème chinois*, Paris, 1967.

This is why we have every right to examine romanticism in organic, inseparable unity with such ideological-aesthetic categories as literature's affinity with the people, the aesthetic ideal and artistic truth.

IV

Here we encounter another problem, still another knot in our discussion—the problem of the hero and the heroic.

Here is one of the principal ideological-aesthetic watersheds between modernism and socialist realism, the art of men who link their work with the most progressive, life-giving ideals of the epoch.

As we see it, one would be hard put to overestimate the significance of the positive hero for the embodiment of an artist's ideals. True, the concepts "ideal" and "hero" are not equivalent; we judge the author's ideal even when the protagonist is a negative character, in satirical works and lyrics.

Nevertheless the image of the hero plays a special part of its own. This is, perhaps, the clearest, most convincing, vital embodiment of the artist's notion of what man is, what he ought to be and what is the purpose of man's life on earth.

Ever since our literature linked its fate with the ideals of Leninism and the revolution once and for all, the image of the genuine hero of the epoch, of man as the master of life, transformer of the world, has occupied a leading position in it. And throughout the decades of the development of socialist realist literature our ideal, the dream Lenin hoped would come true has above all been presented in the image of the new hero: Gorky's Pavel Vlasov, Furmanov's Chapayev, Sholokhov's Davydov and Sokolov, Fadeyev's Levinson and the young guardsmen, Fedin's Izvekov and Polevoi's Meresyev. Thanks to the tremendous influence exerted by these and other figures of Soviet literature the ideals of socialism have become more comprehensible and closer to millions of people on earth.

The principle of embodying certain features of the artist's ideal in a character was recognised by aesthetic theory long ago. Boileau's norms of classicism required that the

hero be free of petty, unworthy feelings, that he be brave and noble, though not entirely without weaknesses.¹

For all their artistic achievements the representatives of classicism and romanticism viewed the process of creating a hero basically as "dressing up" an idea in human form, as the personification of certain norms. This principle is alien to realistic art. The realistic writer does not construct his characters in correspondence with his notions of the ideal, nor does he make them walking mouthpieces for ideas. The realist begins with life. For him the positive hero is a living, human character, a man of his time who to some degree embodies the progressive spirit of the epoch, tendencies of development, the finest ideals of modern life. With regard to the art of socialist realism, only our conscious (at times unconscious) ideological opponents impute primitive "ideal" schemes to it, as though these were its norms. In fact nothing could be further from our aesthetics. The power of socialist realist literature lies precisely in the fact that its hero is not an abstract embodiment of an ideal or a concocted homunculus, but a typical character born of our life.

If we glance at the ranks of heroes who have entered our inner world through literature if only in recent years, we see a variety of unique human individuals that gladdens the heart. Among them are people like Korchagin who astonish us with their integrity and strength, as for example Sergei Petrov in V. Titov's story "To Spite Death"; and heroes who have certain faults and inner contradictions, but nevertheless are charged with conviction and civic spirit, men like Bakhirev in G. Nikolayeva's *Battle on the Way*, like Alexander Krupnov in G. Kononov's *Sources*, like Simonov's Serpilin in *The Living and the Dead*, or Derbachev in P. Proskurin's *Bitter Herbs*, or Stepan Bukov in V. Kozhevnikov's *A Special Subdivision*; here are greenhorns who mature in the fire of war (say, the heroes of S. Baruzdin's novel *Repetition of the Past* or of M. Godenko's *Minefield*); here are typical folk figures like Fenya from M. Alexeyev's novel *The Willow that Didn't Weep*, or V. Lipatov's country detective Aniskin, Platon Yarchuk from I. Stadnyuk's book *People Aren't*

¹ Boileau, *L'art poétique*, Paris, 1912, p. 22.

Angels, old man Glukhar from V. Chivilikhin's story "About Klava Ivanova" and many others. . . .

These images differ in their artistic profundity and capaciousness, but they are as far removed from the normative "ideal hero" as they are from the conception of the mediocre "ordinary man"; the aesthetic ideal is embodied in living, full-blooded human characters. For all their diversity and individuality, they are all heroic by nature; they are not simply positive characters, but heroes of our time.

I would like to note that by concentrating on the epithet "positive" in our discussions of the positive hero, we time and again ignore the second word. But it is the most important of the two. The familiar, much-repeated phrase "positive hero" sounds like "wet water" if one gives it some thought. The word hero has long ceased to be a synonym with the literary term character and now expresses a new content, the very essence of the Soviet epoch. In stressing the diversity of individual characters in the gallery of heroes in socialist realist literature we should not forget that they are all *heroic*, and this is the feature they hold in common. For a protagonist should be heroic; if not he will remain a commonplace "positive character".

This approach is entirely in the spirit of folk aesthetic traditions. We often speak of exaggeration as a typical device for creating negative images, a device rooted in folklore. We should not forget that folk artists never shunned bright colours and lofty words when depicting heroes embodying everything that is bright, healthy and good as well. Folklore accents not the ignorance and humility of the poor man, but above all his exceptional spiritual and physical health, his intelligence, his dexterity and his generosity of spirit.

It would of course be a mistake to give these features of folk aesthetics an all-embracing significance, to make them into canons. Modern realistic art has gone far beyond the means used in folklore in its efforts to grasp reality and there is no reason to ask literature to regress. Here we are speaking only of one link between the problem of the hero and the principle of affinity with the people. The question is a far broader one. Speaking of a literary hero's affinity with the people, we should keep in mind the great diversity of his profound ties with the people's

life, the degree to which major tendencies of that life are embodied in his image, and his incorporation of the people's ideals, aspirations and notions.

But as we see it, there can be no disputing the fact that among the criteria determining a hero's affinity with the people, the most essential is his *heroism*, for the people have always looked upon the *fighter*, the man capable of heroic deeds and exploits, as their ideal; this tradition has long nurtured our literature.

How unfortunate that our criticism and literary scholarship has almost failed to investigate this aspect of the problem of the heroic principle. Indeed such an approach could prove extremely interesting. Bulgarian scholar B. Mikhalkov's book *The Aesthetic Feeling of the Victorious Class*¹ gives evidence of this in its discussion of the heroic as the main element lending structure to a work, the decisive dominant of a complex, multifaceted integrity. His investigation of the ideological-aesthetic content of the category of the heroic and some characteristic features of the heroic in Bulgarian literature permit the author to unite historical-literary studies with meditations on current problems of today's literary development.

"In art," writes Mikhalkov, "the heroic can be seen as a complex revelation of the author's world outlook, artistic method and style. . . ." Such a large-scale, synthetic approach makes the parameters of the problem extraordinarily broad. These include heroic elements in folk poetry and classical Bulgarian literature; heroic traditions and artistic innovation, both genuine and false ("the zig-zags of innovation") which often stem from an uncritical evaluation of modernist trends; heroism and romanticism in socialist realist literature; the heroic as a focal point in the ideological struggle and in this connection the significance of literature for the patriotic and aesthetic upbringing of young people. Each "layer" of the theme is important and interesting in its own right; each gives us room for thought, unconventional comparison and polemic.

B. Mikhalkov is particularly attentive to the heroic traditions of folk poetry. He is not only interested in the historical prerequisites for the development of the heroic

¹ Boris Mikhalkov, *Esteticheskoto samochuvstvie na pobeditata klasa* (The Aesthetic Feeling of the Victorious Class), Sofia, 1970.

in Bulgarian literature, but in those living impulses which continue to stimulate realistic art. An analysis of folk songs is one of his supports in his controversies with alien aesthetic influences, with "chamber" elements, and refined, but sterile artistry. But no matter how sharp his polemic, Mikhalkov does not simplify or "iron out" complex problems, as is sometimes the case; nor does he relax his *scholarly* standards. The author is not inclined to treat the heroic traditions of folk art as a sum of clichés or recipes, an unchanging statistical quantity. These traditions (together with the concept of affinity with the people) appear in dynamic, consistently dialectical development and renewal, in the overcoming of the outdated, and the affirmation of all that is truly productive and promising.

This is Mikhalkov's approach to the heritage of Ch. Botev, L. Karavelov, Ch. Smirnensky, N. Vaptsarov and I. Vazov. "Where should we seek the reasons for the powerful influence of the work of I. Vazov and other poets and writers of that epoch on their successors? What historical trends can be revealed in this process and are we justified in saying that it was continued and developed in the works of our modern literature?" In answering this question the scholar stresses that the revolutionary traditions of Bulgarian literature have their foundations in the history and specific development of the people; these unique traits actively stimulated heroic-romantic, patriotic tendencies in literature and its striving to create the large-scale heroic image of the fighter for national and social liberation. Nothing could have corresponded more to the aspirations and outlook of the masses of Bulgaria, their historically formed social and aesthetic feeling. The power of literature with heroic inspiration and the secret of the mighty, unrelenting ideological-aesthetic revolutionising influence of such heroes as, say, Vazov's Boicho Ognyanov, is derived from their expression of the people's profound need for the heroic, their thirst for exploits in the name of freedom.

Thus the concepts of the heroic and of affinity with the people converge naturally and unobtrusively; the critic traces the complex, mediated, but quite real ties between them. In his analysis of folk songs and the works of classical Bulgarian literature B. Mikhalkov shows that such

qualities as patriotism, love of freedom and humanism lie at the basis of the folk conception of the hero. Traditionally the people sympathise with a courageous, heroic man who is life's master, rather than its victim; a person who is not the slave of men and circumstance. Mikhalkov's book (and this is what brought us to mention it) expresses the idea that heroism is the most typical, chief feature of the folk character and it always will be.

Here, however, it would be useful to mention one essential consideration. Features of a given character in its capacity of a historical unity are not, it goes without saying, exceptional, immanent or immutable. If we proclaim a national character to be the focus of virtues alone and eliminate all negative features and traditions, we will be forgetting Lenin's teachings that each nation contains two nations in an exploiter society. The entire sphere of national character has always been and remains the sphere of a fierce class struggle, a struggle between the old and the new, the conservative and the progressive, between what is truly close to the people and what is merely disguised as such. When we speak of heroism as one of the features of a national character, a heroism that is not superficial or ostentatious, but naturally fused with simplicity and modesty (which confuses scholars who register such a hero as one of the "little men"), we have in mind, not an age-old quality that is automatically inherited, but above all a living, eternally renewed and enriched folk tradition which is embodied and developed in modern literature.

The national character is not an abstraction; it only exists in concrete works of art and is embodied in the fabric of a work written each time by a creative individual. This is why the investigation of this complex, subtle process is so important; this is why we must grasp the dialectic of the revelation of national traits through the artist's individuality, his personal world outlook, his vision of reality, his aesthetic position.

This, I must note, is a far from simple task.

In aesthetics there are certain concepts whose nature and typical features are hard to define logically. Their polysemy and elusiveness makes it difficult and, at time, impossible to "compute" them, to arrive at a scientific description. Some scholars use this as an excuse for bewildered exclamations ("You call this a science?!") and announce that

such concepts are fictional and should be removed from scientific use. Such phenomena, which as L. Novichenko notes lie "more in the sphere of gaseous substances than in the sphere of solids, very elusive, very changeable, but nevertheless quite real", are not acknowledged by the afore-mentioned scholars. . . .

National character is one of these concepts. Allow me to express my belief, or rather my conviction, that a "scientific description" (in the normative sense of the term) of the national character, a register of unique features and traits, can never be made. Thank God. Otherwise we would have gone too far from what is called art.

Nevertheless national character is no fiction, but a very definite aesthetic entity. One merely has to find the methodological key to its study. A genuinely scientific approach to the problem of national character does not involve a clear definition of its borders or a complete statistical analysis in isolation from other aesthetic and moral categories. The main thing is to learn to approach the national character using *concrete* socio-historical and aesthetic criteria. The national character's authenticity can be seen in the fusion of the humane and the social, and how it is manifested in certain historical, social, national conditions; it can be felt in interrelation with folk art traditions and the latest achievements of realistic art, etc.

Moreover, the national character is so multifaceted that it is inconceivable that it would be embodied in one image, no matter how full-blooded and artistically profound that image may be. The revelation of features of the national character, in all its fullness and dialectics, can only be accomplished, in the final analysis, by literature in general. Attempts to do this within the confines of one image as a rule have been unsuccessful even in the works of eminent artists. On the other hand, the more significant and major the talent of an artist, the closer he stands to the people, their spiritual life, moral criteria, aesthetic conceptions, the more completely and convincingly will the typical features of the national character emerge in his work. We have the right to view this as evidence of the work's profound *affinity with the people*.

The question of a hero's "heroism", of its sources and forms of expression is central to recent discussions of the positive, in particular, "ideal" hero.

These discussions elicit sceptical smiles from certain people since they are frequently accompanied by scholastic logomachy. But after some time has passed, the discussion arises again. Obviously it is not merely a matter of one or another author's love of disputes, but a matter of objective laws of the literary process. Behind the discussion of the "ideal hero" we cannot help but sense a profound interest on the part of our critics and the mass reader in the proper resolution of the problems of socialist realist aesthetics.

One of the most recent stormy waves of this discussion surfaced several years ago on the pages of *Literaturnaya gazeta*.

Without going into a detailed examination of this discussion, I would like to dwell briefly on two opposing points of view which express certain tendencies characteristic of the approach to the problem of the hero and the heroic.

The import of A. Dremov's essay "Reality-Ideal-Idealisation",¹ which occasioned the discussion, lies in the affirmation of the heroic character in Soviet literature, of a hero who embodies the lofty spirit of our lives vividly and on a large scale, of a hero who bears the banner of the communist world view and the communist morality, a hero who is a creator, a transformer, a fighter. The essay opposes those who advocate the de-heroisation of literature, those who preach an uninspired, down-to-earth art and make apologies for the "little" man.

In Dremov's essay, however, there are at least two vulnerable points. First, there are elements of a normative, rigid approach which can be seen in the fact that the author does not consider certain images as specifically *artistic* and certain phenomena of art are not always spoken of as *artistic* phenomena. Second, many of his positions are unclear and the critic is not sufficiently consistent in defending his ideas.

Dremov is far more comfortable when making general theoretical points and publicistic digressions than in the sphere of concrete ideological-artistic analysis. Often the critic simply enumerates the features of heroes in a textbook fashion; he does not genuinely fathom the depths

¹ *Oktyabr*, Nos. 1, 2, 1964.

of their character; he fails to examine the hero thoroughly, and does not take account of individual complexities and unique artistic qualities. Accordingly the category of the heroic acquires the features of an abstraction in Dremov's essay. Participants in the discussion rightly noted that to determine the principle according to which Dremov uses such terms as "ideal hero", "heroic character", "positive hero", "ordinary decent hero" is very, very difficult. The author, for example, initially refuses to acknowledge that "ordinary decent heroes" can be called "ideal"; then he groups them with "positive heroes", and by that very action includes them in the category of "ideal images". Terminological confusion? I would rather call this foggy, poorly thought-out conceptions.¹

Dremov's main opponent in this discussion was A. Bocharov.² On the whole he was quite correct in coming out against normative attitudes and speculativeness, in the approach to the problem of the hero, though he did not entirely refrain from polemical transgressions. But the critic went to other extremes. Essentially advocating a purely empirical approach to life by the author and underestimating the significance of an active, purposeful position, Bocharov, as another participant in the discussion justly noted, does not allow "heroes and 'standard-bearers' the preferable right to represent, to characterise our society". Bocharov strives to connect the question of the hero in literature to the tasks of profound comprehension and accurate reflection of reality. But this comprehension and reflection do not come to an artist automatically, through the empirical accumulation of facts and details; nor are they obtained by photographing the stream of life. Bocharov speaks of "the logic of the accurate reflection of reality", and "the broad depiction of our contemporaries", as things which, if not contradictory to the task of creating glorious heroic characters, in any case, are somewhat unrelated to that task and have a separate existence.

¹ In A. Dremov's subsequently published book *The Ideal and the Hero*, one can see traces of the author's efforts to overcome the afore-mentioned weaknesses; but he is not entirely successful in his attempts.

² *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 20, 1964.

But it is precisely "the logic of the accurate reflection of reality" that makes it necessary for art to turn to heroic characters and provides inexhaustible material for the execution of this task. Both Dremov and Bocharov are vulnerable in this discussion because in their thoughts on the hero and the heroic both fail to rely on the *regular processes in the life of the people* and abandon the principle of affinity with the people which is the only thing that can yield, not abstract or artificial, but living criteria for determining the nature of the heroic.

Each epoch gives birth to its own sort of progressive person. In our times a genuine literary hero cannot remain merely "a positive character", but must be a hero, a man of lofty ideals. For this is the case in life where millions of strong people of integrity and conviction, with great passions and sharp, profound minds, act according to the highest principles, work, love, fight, make mistakes and perform feats of valour. We already have such heroes in Soviet literature and this alone is a sign that it is profoundly close to the people. Such a hero should enter into literature with increasing power. This is dictated by the times.

But if this is so, if the nature of the heroic character is closely tied both to the times and to the traditions of folk art, the question arises: how should we regard the de-heroisation of literature? Would it not be logical to see it as a retreat from the principle of affinity with the people, as something alien to our aesthetics?

True, at times doubts are expressed: is there really any more or less concrete evidence of this de-heroisation process in our literature? Are we not overly suspicious and hasty in calling a nuance in the artist's interpretation of the problem of the hero a fully formed tendency?

We should seek an answer in the living literary process, in its real contradictions. Certain works dealing with the events of the Great Patriotic War are particularly telling in this respect. The conception of "man at war" which accumulates in itself the artist's aesthetic and moral views gives a clear reflection of the presence of different approaches to the heroic in life and literature, to the understanding of the nature of the exploit and the means of its artistic depiction.

M. Parkhomov's long story "We Were Shot in '42" gives one of the clearest illustrations of this process; it tells of the tragic death of seventeen Soviet sailors who were captured by the nazis.

This story is clearly conceived as a polemic, and the author makes no effort to conceal this. The message of the work consists in the reappraisal of values, the dethroning of "heroes who are described in books". Describing the "senseless" death from torture of one comrade, the sailor Ponomaryov (he is the narrator of the story) notes, "And does any death makes sense?" This carelessly dropped phrase reveals the concept of the work. Parkhomov, one must assume, wanted to write about the horrible life in a concentration camp, about ordinary, hardly ideal, Soviet people who even here retained their humanity, sense of duty and faith. But in his refusal on principle to portray *active* heroes he has in fact told us only about the death of a handful of prisoners who had neither the physical nor spiritual strength to struggle; about people exhausted from suffering and passively waiting either a miracle or an inevitable end.

True, in the last minutes before the firing squad, the sailors begin to sing a popular sailor's song, but (and this is the logic of the preceding events and the entire atmosphere of the story) this is perceived not as the apotheosis of heroism, the unbending staunchness of the heroes, but rather as a late, despairing flash of courage formerly shown by these people who actually had long ago accepted their terrible fate.

Parkhomov's ideological aesthetic orientation on de heroisation, on the dethroning of "heroes who are described in books", naturally entailed concentration on damaged people, people with rotten spots. The few steadfast positive characters (such as Seroshtan the boatswain, Lenya Balyuk and Kharitonov) are simply happy exceptions among the captive sailors. The rest are either cowards and people concerned only about themselves like Kotsyuba, or the morally devastated, broken men like Sukharev—the "walking corpse", or Perm, "the militant slob", an idler, and the organiser of the fateful drunken binge in the front-line zone. . . . Even the hero, First Lieutenant Semin, who the author believes is a positive character, has spiritual wounds and an inferiority complex. The writer explains

this by the fact that Semin was unjustly expelled from the party; but since we have no knowledge of the reasons or circumstances of this expulsion, the motive is not very convincing.

On closer acquaintance Ponomaryov, the narrator, does not make a positive impression either. His tiresome reiteration of the fact that he is not a party member, his extraordinary disregard for moral norms, and his sententiousness, which smells strongly of philistinism, give rise for serious doubts as to whether the author was right in making Ponomaryov the narrator of the tragic death of seventeen sailors and in inevitably allowing him to evaluate events. In his own way Parkhomov is consistent; having conceived a story without a hero, he could not have chosen other subjects.

"We Were Shot in '42" was not an exception for the author and expresses a specific ideological aesthetic conception; this is evident in his essay written in answer to the magazine *Voprosy literatury's* questionnaire in connection with the twentieth anniversary of Victory.¹ Parkhomov affirmed his position on the hero. Behind the artificial opposition of the "fairy tale", as the writer put it, hero to "ordinary people", behind the abstract ruminations about "honourable, courageous, bold" people and the mockery of the "wondrous *bogatyr*s" who "know neither fear nor doubt", lies that very conception of "de-heroisation" embodied earlier in "We Were Shot in '42".

G. Baklanov's novel *An Inch of Earth* takes a less categorical, but nevertheless disputable position. The title has become a sort of formula defining one direction of prose dealing with the war.

Almost all the critics of Baklanov's novel agree that the author is talented and, no doubt, honest in his efforts to tell the truth about the last war. But there was something that the critics did not agree on. There was something inviting discussion in the novel which could not be overlooked or left in silence. No wonder that L. Lazarev, the first reviewer of the book, "supported" Baklanov in his article "An Inch of Our Earth"² even before anyone had criticised him. . . .

¹ *Voprosy literatury*, No. 5, 1965.

² *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 18, 1959.

An Inch of Earth was subjected to much criticism which, on the whole, was well founded. Critics noted that the writer tended to compose naturalistic scenes of war and gave too stark a description of human suffering. They stressed that he exaggerated the almost animal emotions of fear and horror experienced by a soldier in battle which made him lose control of himself; moreover the hero of the novel attempts, if not to justify these feelings, in any case to explain them, assuring us that Generalov was "no coward" even though he abandoned his men-in-battle. On this account P. Toper rightly notes that such a position objectively "equates the deserter with those who perished because of him"; Motovilov's rhetorical question—"Why is Generalov's mother guilty?"—is essentially a false one, not characteristic of a person on the battlefield "for whom death 'as such' and corpses 'as such' do not exist but only the death of friends and the death of enemies".¹

Finally we cannot help but agree that *An Inch of Earth* is intentionally isolated from other parts of the front and that the "higher-ups" are deliberately presented schematically and at times with elements of caricature.

This is all true. Still we have only consequences here, only concrete artistic manifestations of the main thing—the conception of the "non-hero" drawn into the terrible whirlpool of war, the "little" man whose fate is directed by powers incomprehensible to him, blind chance and age-old instincts. This man is incapable of understanding his lofty calling or the meaning of the struggle in which he has been fated to participate; he does not feel the profound bonds between his own fate and the fate of the people.²

One critic attempts to defend Baklanov by trying to prove that the heroes of *An Inch of Earth* have "thoughts common to all Soviet people"; to this end he cites remarks made by the author and his hero about the Homeland,

¹ P. Toper, *Radi zhizni na zemle. O voyennoy teme v literature* (For Life on Earth: The War Theme in Literature), Moscow, 1971, p. 401.

² It is only fair to note that in later books, in particular the novel *July, Forty-One*, Baklanov strives, although not always successfully, to overcome the limitations of *An Inch of Earth*.

the nature of the exploit, the inseparability of the fate of a Soviet man with the fate of his people.

But an ideological-artistic position is, in the final analysis, expressed not by the author's declarations but in the entire complex of ideas, images, and associations born of the work; the main thing is not what the heroes say, but how they act and think and the logic of their characters.

If one does not confine oneself to citing the "right" declarations but analyses the novel as a complex whole made of ideological and artistic components, where each detail, stroke, nuance and image of the plot and composition serve a given purpose, then in many ways Baklanov has narrowed and impoverished the world in which his heroes live and fight; he has brought them down to earth, made them playthings of fate, chips adrift in the stormy seas of history.

An Inch of Earth lacks a view of the war that corresponds with the true view of the people; it gives a different picture of man's place and role in this kingdom of fire and death. We see no characteristic signs of the "psychology of valour", of that organic, conscious heroism which distinguished Soviet people and which P. Toper rightly links to "the spirit of Tyorkin" in his earlier mentioned book *For Life on Earth*.

We should not, however, overlook the good points of Baklanov's book, above all its attractive lyrical notes, the winning sincerity of its tone, and the many truthful, courageous pages. This makes it all the more imperative to object to the main direction of the work.

But perhaps this was the writer's intent? Perhaps he wanted to depict the most ordinary, unobtrusive people who seem to be unremarkable but nevertheless decided the fate of the war. Can we criticise a book because it *lacks* something? Should we not judge a writer by his own laws?

Apparently some critics see the statement that it is necessary to judge a writer by his own laws not so much as a call to respect a writer's individuality and to fathom his intent, but as an affirmation that he is "absolutely" free from the objective laws of realistic art. For some time this has been a sort of literary fashion, a "struggle" for the thriving of creative individuality. In fact this approach can

turn into ideological-artistic omnivorousness, and lead to a loss of clear criteria.

If Baklanov really intended to show the common, "little" Soviet man at war in *An Inch of Earth* then his intent is misguided and based on flawed foundations. If the writer in fact created his own laws which placed his heroes outside the broad, multifaceted ties with the world around them and the life of the people, then he has broken another law—the law of the aesthetics of socialist realism, which requires the depiction of life in all its fullness, real complexities and revolutionary development.

At one time Baklanov's novel was thrust into the centre of attention in literary life and its advocates proclaimed it to be a new voice in the prose about the Great Patriotic War. But neither its positive qualities, nor the author's revealing errors give any foundation for this. This is why we are so surprised by, say, L. Lazarev's attempts in the review mentioned above to single out Baklanov's book and those of other writers who "once again spoke about depicting war as the soldier saw it". Without the slightest hesitation, the critic gives this group of writers and this movement in our prose—and only this—a monopoly on "interest in the inner world of the simple Soviet man".

But the living literary process lends no credence to such extremely subjective conclusions. On the contrary many phenomena convincingly refute the conceptions embodied in *An Inch of Earth*; and they dispute it, not only by their artistic manner, but in essence.

Take the chapters of M. Sholokhov's novel *They Fought for Their Country*. At first glance the tireless joker Lopakhin or the homely snub nosed nurse who saves Zvyagintsev, or Zvyagintsev himself, recalling long-forgotten childhood prayers under the terrible mortar fire seem at all close to the heroes of *An Inch of Earth*. It would seem to be the same unvarnished, emphatically unromantic intonation, the same unembroidered truth. . . .

But why, then, do these books seem so different? Why is the earthly, contradictory Zvyagintsev, even in moments of human weakness, so much more integral and attractive than Baklanov's heroes? Obviously the difference is not merely in the scale of their talent, which goes without saying, but in the fact that Sholokhov's narrative is illuminated from within; and this inner light makes the face

of the nurse uniquely beautiful; it makes Zvyagintsev (whose mortal horror turns into a burst of irrepressible hatred for the enemy), Lopakhin, Sgt. Poprishchenko and Streltsov (who has fled the hospital) stand before us in their genuine heroic essence. These ordinary people hardly resemble wondrous *bogatyr*s, and yet within each is the seed of that great, unconquerable power of the people, that inner conviction in the justice of their cause, and a constant readiness to perform feats of valour, and an understanding that his fate is inseparable from the fate of the people; this gives Sholokhov's images an epic scope, and universal significance.

Y. Bondarev's story "The Last Salvos" is also similar to that of Baklanov, not only in time, but in its depiction of the bloody days of war, ordinary heroes, and the same "inch of earth", in the end. Similar, and yet different. No matter how terrible a picture of death he draws, Bondarev nevertheless presents us with bright encounters with heroism and conscious feats of valour, embodied primarily in the image of Captain Novikov. This "half-adult-half-boy", the youngest captain in the regiment, has a winning integrity; he is collected, possessed of a powerful intellect, morally pure, chaste, and generous of spirit. These qualities are hidden beneath a surface severity, laconicism and a hot temper. The war deprived Novikov of his youth at too early an age, making him encounter death and the harsh truth of human suffering; but it did not break him or extinguish his love for life, faith in people, in goodness, in beauty, and in the grandeur of what his comrades-in-arms were painfully dying for. His death is bitter, like any death, but it has a meaning, for it is a heroic death.

Whatever people may say the aesthetic of socialist realism professes principles common to all artists, no matter how individual or unique their styles or manners may be. One such principle is attention to the heroic, an ability to reveal the heroic in life, to convincingly embody it in the image of the new man. This is one of the most vital aspects of Soviet literature's affinity with the people; without it the new element that our literature brings to modern artistic practice cannot be understood.

* * *

All among us, it would seem, agree that recent years have been portentous for our literature in bringing it closer to the life of the people. At first glance the question is beyond dispute.

But this is only at first glance. The discussion continues and revolves around the problem of *what should be seen* as evidence of this affinity and how it should be treated.

In recent years a growing number of critics have come to hold the view that intensification of this affinity with the people is above all connected to the tendency toward de-heroisation, with the appearance of the anti hero in literature, the ordinary, commonplace man who allegedly expresses the people's spirit and expresses genuine affinity with the people (this affinity is apparently interpreted as a sort of "folksiness").

V. Lakshin, who for a fairly long period of time has been one of the central contributors to literary discussions, offers the most consistent interpretation of this point of view.¹

The critic's point of departure is the idea that in recent years we have witnessed the process of the "real, and not announced" convergence of literature with the life of the people. In itself this observation means nothing new, but characteristically, the critic imbues it with another idea.

Essentially Lakshin's conception can be reduced to the following: while in the past our literature was preoccupied with depicting "leaders, organisers and men who inspired us", today it has turned to the depiction of "people who are led and organised, the most ordinary people".

What are we immediately struck by in this scheme outlining the development of Soviet literature? The fact that it is a *scheme*. A scheme that cannot be compared to the living literary process. It is sufficient to recall a few images from our literature of the period from 1920 to 1940s, such diverse images of "the most ordinary people" as Grigory Melekhov, Morozka, Grandad Shchukar, Egor Dremov, Vassili Tyorkin. On the other hand we are confronted with such recent "leaders" as Bakhirev, Baluyev, Serpilin, Litvinov, Derbachyov, Anton Savelyev and others. So it becomes clear that Lakshin's proposition is artificial and

¹ See *Novy mir*, No. 1, 1964; No. 4, 1965; No. 8, 1966.

far-fetched. The heroes of Soviet literature cannot be subjected to such delimitations.

This is not all. Let us ponder the *essence* of the conception "leaders" and "those who are led" which Lakshin claims explains the processes occurring in our literature of recent years.

It would seem that the theory of "leaders" and "those who are led" is quite democratic and decidedly opposed to the notorious theory of insignificant people who are mere "cogs" in the huge machine of life; it would seem actively directed against lack of faith in the masses, underestimation of the people as creators of history, and accordingly should help our literature to grow closer to the people. But on closer examination we find that this is not the case.

Belinsky spoke sarcastically of that "bast-shoes and sackcloth" opinion that "the true national spirit is hidden exclusively beneath a homespun coat in a hut", while "there is nothing in the life of educated men that bears the least resemblance to an affinity with the people".¹

The words of the great critic involuntarily come to mind when we encounter the statement that it is "easier" to write "about academicians, secretaries of district committees, chief agronomists and directors of machinery-and-tractor stations" than to write about "simple" labourers. Most importantly, if we look to this "bast-shoes and sackcloth" thesis for support, it turns out that the concept of the "cog" is no longer subjected to any doubts since these "led", "organised", "most ordinary", "commonplace" people are no other than "cogs". Lakshin is taking pains to make sure that people don't forget about the "cogs", that they continue to write about them and remain attentive and interested in them. . . . The critic does not notice that his concerns about "people who are led" is profoundly lacking in respect for those people. Nor is he aware that in his heated rejection of former dogmas, he is proposing nothing more than the same dogmas, turned inside-out, renovated, made up to resemble affinity with the people.

Literature, however, develops, not according to schemes and recipes invented by critics, but according to the laws of the people's life and its own laws. Its power, the guar-

¹ V. G. Belinsky, *Works* in 3 volumes, Vol. 3, p. 503 (in Russian).

antee of its success and reflection of its affinity with the people, if we speak seriously about recent years, can definitely not be attributed to the fact that it has ceased to speak of "leaders" and become concerned with "those who are led". A table of ranks and an official approach has never been the index of the people's involvement in our literature's development; this is alien to its nature. Its affinity with the people can be seen in its wideranging treatment of the people's life, in its description of the creative spirit of the Soviet people, the builders and masters of the country, in its clearly felt efforts to go out onto the highway of history and contemporaneity where the fates of the revolution, of socialism and the future have been and are resolved, in its attempts to reveal the complex, dramatic, magnificent truth about the Soviet working man, to show this man "of the masses" as a monumental, heroic and at the same time genuinely national character who participates organically in the broad flow of the life of the working masses.

It is characteristic that very recent books, for all their natural thematic diversity and many colours, have been concerned with crucial turning points in our history, the most important pages in the chronicle of the people's life. Typically these works incorporate large segments of the people's life, whole stages in its development. I am speaking of such works as A. Ivanov's *Shadows Disappear at Noon* and *Eternal Call*, M. Alexeyev's *Bread Is a Substantive*, A. Ananyev's *Boundary*, S. Krutinin's *The Lipyags* and P. Proskurin's *Fate*. . . .

Naturally such a thematic outline cannot fully reflect the theme of the people's life in our literature. In general the process of bringing literature closer to the people cannot be confined in narrow thematic boundaries, a fact which deserves special mention.

But now we are speaking of something else. The aforementioned thematic aspect of the question clearly shows the fact that our literature devotes much time and energy to the depiction of the people's life; it bears witness to its intensive, purposeful efforts to create an artistic chronicle of the people's struggle and achievements; and it shows how little Lakshin's scheme corresponds to reality.

Anyone who takes the trouble to study the prose of recent years seriously and without prejudice cannot help

but notice that in the best books that determine its character, the so-called simple, ordinary worker is depicted as neither simple, nor ordinary; his social role is not only determined by his function at work, but above all by the fact that he feels himself to be the master of his life. If he becomes a "leading" official, this is not in spite, but because of the fact that his fate and thoughts are bound with those of the people, whom Lakshin calls "the people who are led"; he is flesh of their flesh. The tradition of creating images of leaders who are genuinely close to the people, leaders of the masses is one of the most life giving traditions in the literature of socialist realism. The power of today's literature lies, not in the re examination of this tradition, not in rejecting it, but, on the contrary, in developing it at a new stage, in purifying this tradition of all alluvium.

This is a complex process with many strata. It includes the creation of images of major party and economic leaders and the theme of the political and moral denouncement of all the decaying concepts, habits and methods that frequently hamper us; it also implies the noticeable increase of literary attention to the grass-roots communist leader, the man who has been chosen by the masses, their guide, elevated from the very depths of the people's life. These are all facets of one great vast and significant process: the broad, consistent intensification of our literature's affinity with the people, the artistic affirmation of the concept of the working man as the true master of his own destiny, as the creator of the future, a concept clearly opposed both to the old and the modernised theories of the "cog". The watershed between that which has been outlived and that which is new in our literature is an ideological and moral watershed, one which has least to do with a person's official status.

... When Second Lieutenant Vedernikov, disguised as the nephew of Porfiry Isayev, had penetrated the commune "Druzhba" and met with its chairman, Roman Bastrykov (G. Markov's *Father and Son*) he immediately sensed the tremendous power of this man, although this power was hostile to him. "That's the head communist, Commissar Bastrykov," quessed Vedernikov and suddenly felt himself shiver from head to toe. . . . The fellow continued to approach him. Although he had neither a uniform nor epau-

lets and was a very ordinary looking fellow, Vedernikov immediately singled him out. There was something powerful in his bony, awkward figure and the long, large hands. He squinted at Vedernikov and the latter felt that he had been lashed with something hot." The power of Bastrykov's gaze was also felt by the whiteguard Fialkov, disguised as Kasyanov, the chairman of a provincial consumer union, who had come to the commune to take care of Bastrykov. "Kasyanov glanced at Bastrykov from behind his glasses and immediately looked away. Bastrykov's gaze pierced right through him. 'Can he have guessed,' Kasyanov wondered, a shiver run up and down his back."

Their intuition, sharpened by class hatred, did not deceive Kasyanov and Vedernikov; in fact they had encountered a remarkable person of extraordinary integrity, a man of tremendous spiritual strength. At the same time, although Roman is an acknowledged communist leader who enjoys almost unlimited trust and authority, he is not pretentious and does not claim to be superman. Bastrykov's authority is very much an inherent quality; his power as a chairman is seen as something natural and lawful. It does not distance or separate Roman from the members of the commune, but, on the contrary, is the result of his total unity with the masses; his leadership quality is the concentrated embodiment of the best traits of the character of the people: love for labour, the ability to work, unshaking faith in Lenin's truth and the idea of joint labour and collective life, a sort of lucidity, aspirations for the future and the profound, winning humanity seen in his attitudes toward his son, his dead wife, and to Lukeria with her tragic, shattered life, and toward his fellow-villagers at the commune.

Take the "eternal deputy" Akimushka Akimov from Alexeyev's long story *Bread Is a Substantive*. Like his father and his grandfather, he has spent his entire life as a village blacksmith and never held any posts; he could easily have remained among "those who are led". But apart from the collective farm party organiser Apollon Styshnoy, there is no other man in Vyselki who has as much unquestionable, immutable authority as Akimushka. It is no accident that many people in Vyselki couldn't even remember when Akimushka was elected deputy of the village Soviet; the years passed and although there were no

less than fifteen different chairmen and secretaries, in difficult and joyful times Akimushka fulfilled the duties of the "eternal deputy". And there was none who failed to experience Akimushka's goodness, and a few who were subjected to his just severity.

Well, Akimushka, not to mention Bastrykov, is still an official, if only a minor one, a deputy of the village Soviet.

But let's consider another character from the same book by Alexeyev-Merkidon Lyushnya. What forces him to wander with a rifle about the forest "in the dead of night, in cruel frosts, in terrible blizzards and pouring rain, at times when a good master wouldn't drive a dog outside"? What gives assurance and power to his voice, what makes his words convincing when he says, "Drop that axe and saw, or I'll shoot!"? Is it love of nature and the woods? Yes. But it is something else as well: a feeling that he is personally responsible for the common property of the people. This makes his fellow-villagers respect him, although they smile good naturedly at the eccentricities of the self-styled forest ranger. "No wonder. His name fits him," says Grandpa Kaplya. "Lyushnya! Young folks don't know what *lyushnya* is. In fact it is brace and in the old days you couldn't go to the fields to gather the sheaves without it. Without a *lyushnya*, the wheel rim of a good cart wouldn't hold; it would snap in two like a reed. All of the support was in the *lyushnya*!"

What about Grandpa Kaplya? This grain-grower from a farming family is the author of the eloquent utterance that gives the story its name. "What could be more important than bread?! Bread is a substantive!" Kaplya lectures the ne'er-do well Samonka, who flaunts his "extraordinary function in Moscow, the capital". "Because we can only subsist on daily bread. Bread is a substantive, and all other foods are adjectives. Right, Comrade Commissar?!"

What is common among these men is their sense of being *masters of life*; this is what relates them to Roman Bastrykov, Akimushka Akimov, and Anton Savelyev from A. Ivanov's *Eternal Call*. This outlook is determined not by function or an official position, but by the labour and dignity of the working man no matter what post he occupies; it is the most important, significant feature of the character of the people today, one which is incompatible

with the theory of men as cogs and with a sentimental affection for those who are "led" and "organised".

Of course it is premature to speak of total harmony between socialist society and each individual; such harmony can only come as the result of a lengthy, complex process of development, through struggle.

But it is one thing to accurately recreate this process and its major tendencies and perspectives, and quite another to make the basic premise of one's depiction of our reality the idea that in principle the interests of society and the state are incompatible with those of the individual, to see the people's truth as something abstract and alien from the truth of the struggle for socialism. The theory of "leaders" and "those who are led" is objectively directed toward such an interpretation of affinity with the people, one alien to the aesthetic of socialist realism.

Extraordinary ordinary people. The great "little" man has unlimited interests and possibilities. Master and builder of life, he wins the right to this lofty title through his labours. This is Soviet conception of man.

“HE IS
AS SIMPLE
AS THE TRUTH...”

Without fear of exaggerating we can say that one of the central ideas of Leninist aesthetics is to bring art closer to the people. Lenin believed that the successful resolution of this problem would guarantee art's affinity with the people, causing it to flourish and achieve greater heights; at the same time it would assure the aesthetic education of the masses, allowing them to share the spiritual riches accumulated by mankind.

Lenin bitterly noted that before the revolution nine-tenths of the population of tsarist Russia were denied access to the treasures of their national literature because of illiteracy; they did not know Lev Tolstoy or Pushkin or any of the other classics.

For this reason one of the first tasks of socialist construction proposed by Lenin was to effect a cultural revolution. An extensive system of measures was directed toward elevating the level of enlightenment and education in the country, including aesthetic education. Lenin's idea that art must be brought closer to the people and the people closer to art determined the main course of the cultural revolution.

"He (V. I. Lenin-Y.B.) believed that one of the main tasks of the cultural revolution was to destroy the partition between the masses and artistic culture," writes the Soviet literary critic G. Nedoshvin, "that is, to transform culture according to the interests of the people, for he believed that under the construction of socialism art should become accessible to millions and play a direct role in forming and expressing their interest."¹

¹ G. Nedoshvin, "O narodnosti iskusstva" (Art's Affinity with the People), *Iskusstvo i narod* (Art and the People), Moscow, 1966, p. 10.

The problem of bringing art closer to the people is complex and multifaceted. It includes a whole arsenal of questions: forms of relations between art and the material and spiritual life of the masses, their aesthetic level and needs; relations between the inherently individual nature of artistic creativity (Gorky noted that art has "a high degree of individualism") and the creator's responsibility to the people; the assimilation of the best traditions of folk art and the enrichment of art with new means of artistic expression; the artist's quest for the truest paths to the mind and heart of the masses, etc. Each question requires a subtle, dialectical analysis, taking into consideration various aspects and excluding any straightforwardness or tendency to oversimplify.

Questions of artistic mastery are by no means of a purely technological nature; they acquire vital significance when such an approach is taken. Rejecting aestheticism with its interpretation of mastery as formal skill, Marxist-Leninist aesthetics utterly rejects the total indifference to form which characterises the vulgar sociological approach. It views mastery, not as a goal in itself, but as a means of conveying the content of art, and the only means, for no matter how significant and commendable the ideas of a work of art they remain cold abstractions if they do not find full-fledged artistic embodiment. In other words, the problem of mastery concerns the relations between the writer and his prospective audience.

This is why the Communist Party of the Soviet Union attaches such great significance to the task of raising the level of Soviet literature and art, and confronts the artist with the task of developing and perfecting his skills.

"It would not be amiss to note here," says the Report of the Central Committee to the 24th Party Congress, "that we are still getting quite a few works that are shallow in content and inexpressive in form. We sometimes even get cases of works being dedicated to a good, topical theme but giving the impression that the artist has taken too insubstantial an approach to his task, that he has not put all his effort, his talent into it. It seems to me that we all have the right to expect those who are in the arts to be more demanding of themselves and of their colleagues."¹

¹ *24th Congress of the CPSU*, Moscow, 1971, p. 106.

There are many discussions among us about aesthetic nature, content and the scope of the concept of artistic mastery. In the literary milieu, for example, there is a widespread view that mastery is the same as craft, the sum of skills and devices; and that once a person has mastered these he can become a writer without much work. Thus an apprentice who has learned to put on heels and taps is licensed as a shoemaker, or a student takes a few lessons in hairdressing and finds himself already standing by a chair with scissors in one hand and a comb in the other. . . . The process of creating a novel, novella, play or poem seems fairly simple for those who think in this way. A writer resolves to write a book, gets an idea, draws up an outline and begins; with agile movements he stretches and ties the threads of the plot into knots, knocks together the framework, then, using one brush here, another one there, turns out portraits of characters, arranges them in certain combinations, and so on.

What can we say? Literary technique is a category in itself. It would be strange to deny that there exist certain formal norms relating to the construction of a work of art which have been worked out through centuries of experience and provided with theoretical backing. Just as a painter must perfect his mastery of the laws of perspective, colour relations, and the technique of drawing, the poet is obliged to know the principles of rhyme, rhythm, melody, and know the difference between a ballad and a sonnet, tonic and syllabo-tonic verse, etc. At one time there were many handbooks on poetics and versification, etc. One author condescendingly explained to a "dear lady" who wished to write poetry that "it is easy to become a poet like me" (?!—Y.B.): "The writing of verse is also a craft."¹

But as it happens no one has mastered the art of poetry by following such textbooks. Literary technique *as such* (even the most perfect) is only an alphabet for creativity, one of the elements of artistic mastery—a concept which is broader and more meaningful.

Imagine a young, beginning writer who has mastered the arts of verse composition. His poems sparkle with the fireworks of unusual rhymes and "original" images

¹ Nikolai Shebuev, *Versifikatsiya (kak pisat stikhi)* [Versification (How to Write Verse)], Moscow, 1913, p. 9.

that dazzle readers. But who would ever call him a master? No, mastery is something more than the sum of technical devices; it also includes the artist's life experience, his knowledge of people, his unique artistic vision, and much, much more.

Those who reduce mastery to craftsmanship sin doubly. On the one hand, whether they intend to or not, they support the remnants of vulgar sociological views which can still be felt in criticism. If mastery is only a set of meaningless professional skills then should we speak of it at all? The main thing is the idea, and the rest will come with time. . . . What an expanse for critical dilettantism, for those who do not want to and cannot analyse a work in the complex unity of its ideological and artistic components! A mountain of reviews are born; these give a primitive restating of the content and then offer schoolboy judgments on "harmonious composition", "pithy, expressive language", and "well-constructed plot", etc.

On the other hand an essential compromise is made to formalism and its cult of "making things". If artistic mastery is identical with craftsmanship, the sum of devices, then how can one object to the thesis proposed by one representative of the Russian "formal school", that "from the point of view of plot construction, there is no need to bring in the concept of content in analysing a work of art. . ." ?¹

All that remains is to follow Roman Jakobson's advice and acknowledge the device as the only "hero" of literary scholarship.²

These two concepts, which would seem to be diametrically opposed, the vulgar and formalist, both separate form from content and artificially divorce the ideological from the artistic aspect.

As we know, Marxist Leninist aesthetics is based on the proposition that the unity of form and content is an indispensable condition for a work of art. The content of a work can only be revealed through a certain form, and form, in turn, is inseparable from content and dependent on it.

¹ *Poetika. Sborniki po teorii poeticheskoi rechi* (Poetics. Anthologies on the Theory of Poetic Speech), issue 3, Petrograd, 1919, p. 144.

² See Roman Jakobson, *Noveishaya russkaya poeziya. Nabrosok pervy* (Modern Russian Poetry. First Draft), Prague, 1921, p. 11.

If mastery is seen only as craftsmanship, then the artistic aspect of a work is thrown overboard, that very concept of artistic value which includes the entire complex and multifaceted interrelations of form and content, and whose essence cannot be understood without bringing in the question of the social character of art, the degree of veracity in depicting life, typicality and aesthetic cogency of the characters.

The identification of mastery and craftsmanship does not hold up when compared with artistic practice, the work of genuine masters. Let me stress the word genuine, because there have always existed literary craftsmen whose "creative laboratory" looks like a properties shop with props for any theatrical occasion. But these writers do not determine the course of our literature and it would be strange to build theories on their "experience".

Speaking of true literature, can we really say that Lermontov's penetrating lyricism, caustic irony and angry sarcasm are no more than devices of a craftsman? Can we really say that the secret behind the impressive power of Chekhov's stories is that they are constructed according to the canons of composition? Is it only the cold hand of the craftsman, and no talent, intelligence, pain and civic passion, that lies behind Gogol's unexpected violations of outward verisimilitude, Dostoevsky's paradoxes and Tolstoy's profound treatment of human psychology?

This is nonsense. But such propositions would follow from the notion that mastery is craftsmanship. If the choice of characteristic conflicts and phenomena from the infinite stream of life and the artistic interpretation of leading tendencies in reality is not mastery; if the creation of typical and unique characters is not mastery; if the achievement of a white-hot flame of emotion, the revelation of the profoundest processes of the human soul and the subtle use of the inexhaustible wealth of a national language is not mastery, then what is the meaning of literary endeavour?

The problem of mastery is an old one, perhaps even an eternal one. Today especially there are long, serious discussions on it. Leading writers anxiously warn new generations of authors and critics of the harmful break between the ideological aspect of the creative process and artistic mastery.

Increased attention to poetics and questions of mastery is accompanied by a noticeable activation of literary scholarship in the realm of theoretical problems of socialist realism. This, in our view, is noteworthy and proper.

Enemies of our literature, who have increased their attacks on socialist realism in recent years, affirm that this method is not artistic, but merely a political doctrine which does not and cannot reveal any perspectives in the *aesthetic* assimilation of reality. We ourselves at times unwittingly impoverish socialist realism in our statements and theorising, stripping it of its living spirit. Ilya Ehrenburg, for example, regarded socialist realism as the *socialist world outlook*; the logical conclusion to this would be that this concept does not embrace *aesthetic* values. Another author theorises that innovations in the art of socialist realism are only related to "new content"; such an approach considers the sphere of artistic value, aesthetic quests and formal innovation beyond the boundaries of the category "socialist realism".¹

But the entire process of the formation and development of the art of socialist realism is not only one of constant replenishment of works with new ideas, new, socialist content; it is also a genuine revolution in the system of artistic thought, a grandiose chain of *aesthetic discoveries*. In the best models of socialist realism innovation in the sphere of content is inseparable from innovative form.

In this connection Alexander Fadeyev wrote: "Major works of socialist realism are always unexpected from the point of view of their form. *The Life of Klim Samgin*, *The Iron Flood*, *Ordeal*, *And Quiet Flows the Don* all flow like a full, mighty river beyond all canons. These are absolutely unique phenomena. Try to reveal the plot of *Virgin Soil Upturned* in terms of old canons. What is the form of Furmanov's *Chapayev*, of Leonov's *The River Sott* or Ehrenburg's *The Fall of Paris*, or Panova's *Fellow Travelers*? Makarenko's pedagogical works and Bazhov's tales have very unusual forms, as do the novels of K. Fedin, V. Kataev, V. Kaverin and F. Panferov. Any major phenomenon in our literature has unexpected unusual form based on new content."²

¹ See A. Anikst, "O sotsialisticheskom realizme" (On Socialist Realism), *Iskusstvo kino*, No. 7, 1957.

² A. Fadeyev, *Za tridtsat let. Izbrannyye statyi, rechi i pisma o*

Here and only here is the true path to the resolution of the problem of mastery.

This, of course, does not excessively enlarge the scope of this term or make it imprecise, diffuse or too vague (as proponents of the theory of art as craft claim). This implies a dialectical, historically concrete approach, an effort to examine all complexities of the question, without yielding to its apparent "clarity" or "local" character.

The given observations touch upon only a few aspects of the problem of artistic mastery. The author would like to single out for discussion the aesthetic category of artistic simplicity, which is rarely examined by literary scholars.

* * *

Artistic simplicity. . . . This concept does not seem likely to inspire a discussion. Nor is it unusual.

Who among us has not heard and repeated the fact that one should write briefly, laconically and simply.

Who is not familiar with this example: Chekhov writes a letter advising Gorky to abandon his long sentences, overburdened with attributives, and write simply, "A man sat on the grass."¹

Who does not know of the creative laboratory of Tolstoy, Flaubert and other classical masters, with their huge, painstaking, astounding work on manuscripts in order to achieve the ultimate clarity, simplicity and expressiveness with each word.

Still one sometimes hears writers, particularly young ones, express doubts. Why simplicity? Aren't calls for simplicity an anachronism, a prejudice of the past, and don't they urge an artist to be primitive and schematic?

You see simplicity is not all that clear a concept, nor is it academic. It is a mass of contradictions and the object of heated discussions.

In our daily criticism we often repeat the word "simplicity", but more often than not in vain. The aesthetic essence, the nature of artistic simplicity has not been well

literature i iskusstve (Thirty Years. Selected Essays, Speeches and Letters on Literature and Art), Moscow, 1957, pp. 431-32.

¹ M. Gorky and A. Chekhov, *Perepiska, statyi, vyskazyvaniya* (Correspondence, Essays, Statements), Moscow, 1951, p. 54.

studied, and the criterion itself is transformed into a familiar yardstick, but one that's really not all that important. In any case it hardly affects concrete, artistic evaluations.

What is still worse, the problem of artistic simplicity, the problem of *simplicity* and *complexity* in a work of art (to be more precise) are not connected by us with the concept of *accessibility* of literature in all of its complexity. Recently world aesthetic thought has been intrigued with the relation between so-called "mass" culture and real art, between the artistic élite and the aesthetic needs of the people. No doubt, under socialist conditions these problems are resolved according to different principles than in bourgeois society, but still there is no basis for thinking that such questions do not confront Soviet art in one form or another. Our art also cannot ignore such issues as the elevation of the cultural level of the masses; the growth of their spiritual and aesthetic needs as a result of the Leninist cultural revolution; the enormous expansion of material and technological basis of culture in our country and the growth and perfecting of the mass media (cinema, radio, television) whose role in society increases hourly; the objective process of the enrichment and, in many respects, the complexity of artistic language reflecting the growing complexity of man's spiritual life.

This is why the problem of complexity and simplicity in artistic works should be examined as one of the important problems of modern aesthetics.

1. Among attempts by philosophers and aestheticians to give their interpretation of the nature of artistic simplicity (and the number of attempts reflects the importance of the question) one's attention is drawn to the thought of the distinguished English positivist H. Spencer. Examining problems of literary style and human perception, Spencer wrote that one main requirement underlies all rules determining the choice and use of words: retention of attention. In many cases the main goal of style is to lead the mind to grasp the question at hand in the quickest way possible.

At first glance there would seem to be serious foundations for this view. Does not the writer strive to find the "easiest" path to the mind and heart of the reader and convey his idea with the least effort? Should we not fol-

low Spencer's advice and search for the roots of artistic simplicity here?

Attentive examination reveals the direct relation between Spencer's "retention of attention", and the well known "principle of economy of thought", proposed by representatives of empirio criticism. Richard Avenarius in his work *Philosophy as Thought on the World According to the Principle of the Least Waste of Energy*, and Ernst Mach in *Analysis of Sensations* made this principle a basis of the theory of cognition. Avenarius wrote, "If the soul had inexhaustible powers, then it would be indifferent to the loss of any powers from this inexhaustible source; only lost time would be important. But since its powers are limited we should expect the soul to strive to carry out apperceptional processes as efficiently as possible, that is, with the minimal expenditure of energy or . . . with the best results possible."¹

In his book *Materialism and Empirio Criticism* V. I. Lenin convincingly revealed the essence of the principle of economy of thought as attempts "to smuggle in *subjective idealism* under a new guise".² If it is used as a basis for the theory of cognition in the way that Mach, Avenarius and empiriomonist A. Bogdanov and empiriosymbolist P. Yushkevich used the principle, it can lead to nothing but subjective idealism, for in the name of "economy of thought" matter is discarded and sensation is regarded as the only essential element. "That it is more 'economical' to 'think' that only I and my sensations exist is unquestionable, provided we want to introduce such an absurd conception into *epistemology*,"³ Lenin ironically notes.

In counterbalance to the theory of "economy of thought" and Mach's interpretation of the categories of "expediency" and "simplicity", Lenin advanced the concept of the *truth* of thought as a vital epistemological principle. "Human thought is 'economical' when it *correctly* reflects objective truth, and the criterion of this correctness is practice, experiment and industry."⁴

¹ Richard Avenarius, *Philosophie als Denken der Welt gemäss dem Prinzip des kleinsten Kraftmasses*, Berlin, 1903, S. 13.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 169.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Lenin's criticism of the theory of the "minimal expenditure of energy", and his thesis that the main feature of "economical" thought is the *correct reflection of objective reality*, are of enormous significance for aesthetics; in particular they provide a philosophical key to the resolution of the problems of artistic simplicity. Lenin's theory of cognition makes it absolutely clear that the subjective category of "retention of attention" must never be viewed as a goal in itself; one must always consider the problem of truthfulness in an artistic work and regard literary style as a means for the fullest and most precise reflection of reality.

Lenin's theory of reflection presupposes that the problem of artistic simplicity be examined in its integral relation with the problem of realism as a creative method whose goal is the totally accurate, objective reflection of reality.

Thus we see the close connection between the category of artistic simplicity and such fundamental aesthetic questions as realism, truth, and art's affinity with the people.

It is telling that in his essay *V. I. Lenin*, Gorky defined the characteristic feature of the great leader through the lips of the Sormovo factory worker Dmitry Pavlov: "Simplicity! He's as simple as the truth."¹

For the people truth and simplicity have long been sisters. Truth, as a rule, is simple. Not primitive, not elementary, but simple. It needs no contrivances, camouflage, or confusing complexity. The more simply and naturally it is expressed, the greater impression it makes.

Naturally the accurate reflection of certain aspects of reality is not exclusively the prerogative of the realistic method. Some aspects of the living truth are to some degree reflected in the art of all times and peoples, no matter what its method or movement. This does not permit us to call realism an "eternal" method. On the other hand one should not underestimate the fact, confirmed by the entire history of world aesthetic thought, that the representatives of progressive art of all epochs, those who came closest to the realisation of the criterion of veracity in a work of art,

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* in thirty volumes, Vol. 17, Moscow, 1952, p. 15 (in Russian).

fought for simplicity and clarity which they saw as the prerequisites of truth. One of the most ancient theoreticians of art, Aristotle noted in his *Poetics* that one of the "virtues of verbal expression" is "to be clear", and he attempted to trace the means by which writers achieved clarity in various works through a skilful combination of "low" speech and figurative elements.

We would not be mistaken in saying that *the striving for clarity of expression, for artistic simplicity, is one of the most important aspects of man's artistic assimilation of reality; to some degree this is an age-old sign of a healthy aesthetic sense*, which has been more or less apparent to aestheticians since time immemorial.

The problem of artistic simplicity in literature is primarily related to realism as a creative method which arose at a certain historical stage and made truth its cornerstone; it presupposes the most precise, accurate depiction of life with all its complexities and contradictions. It is natural that realism would declare war on aesthetic refinement and artificial complexity, acknowledging only the depiction of life that was "simple as the truth", expressed in the most precise, clear and unequivocal language. Pushkin had this fundamental feature of realism in mind when he said, "Precision and brevity are the greatest virtues of prose,"¹ and in many letters Chekhov persisted in reminding the young Gorky of the necessity to avoid verbosity and superfluous images.

Naturally when Chekhov advised him to write exclusively in sentences like "A man sat on the grass", "The sun set", "It grew dark", "Rain fell", and so on, there was an element of polemics in his words. He did not propose to entirely divest literature of epithets, metaphors, similes, etc. in order to merely record and "name" phenomena. Chekhov was far from this position. But he did find it possible, even necessary to stress the question of simple style, for he fought for a realistic, truthful literature that would be close and comprehensible to the people, one which "would be assimilated by the brain immediately, . . . in seconds".²

¹ A. S. Pushkin, *Collected Works* in ten volumes, Vol. 7, Moscow, 1958, p. 15 (in Russian).

² M. Gorky and A. Chekhov, *Perepiska*, p. 54.

What conclusion can we draw from this? Obviously the roots of artistic simplicity should be sought in the realm of epistemology, in its closely interwoven philosophical, ideological and aesthetic aspects.

True, there were attempts of another sort. Some years ago L. Gumilevsky attempted to resolve the problem of artistic simplicity from a somewhat unexpected perspective: the physiological viewpoint. Although *A Writer's Notes*¹ was written several years ago, we feel it is not out of place to return to it, for the question is still relevant.

Gumilevsky's notes have a certain interest; his approach to the theme is rather unusual and he makes some interesting observations on literary style. One can only welcome his concern with theoretical questions and his efforts to comprehend one of the most complex and ill defined problems of style—the problem of precision and simplicity. Finally, Gumilevsky's attempt to relate these questions to Pavlov's teachings on higher nervous activity deserves attention in principle. But his principal overall conception gives rise to serious objections.

Gumilevsky begins with the premise that neither philosophy, psychology, literary scholarship nor linguistics can provide objective criteria for artistic mastery. In his opinion *only* the teachings of Pavlov on the second signal system, *only* physiology give us the sacred key to the problems of style in general and in particular to simplicity, brevity and precision of literary language. True, in commenting on remarks made by Pushkin and Gorky in this regard, Gumilevsky writes that "these requirements are conditioned by physiological necessity *as well*", as though allowing for other prerequisites apart from physiology. But this "as well" is, in fact, cancelled out by his direct statement that the social sciences cannot resolve the problem of style, and by the whole spirit and tone of the essay.

Undoubtedly the problem of precise, brief and simple style (like any problem related to human thought) has a physiological aspect as well. There is a kernel of truth in Gumilevsky's ideas on "the temporal coincidence of verbal signals and physiological processes elicited by them", the "capaciousness" of the artistic word, which he sees as a

¹ See *Voprosy literatury*, No. 6, 1958.

conditioned irritant, the new approach of combining it with other irritants, and so on.

We have no quarrel with the author's attempt to attract the attention of literary scholars to Pavlov's ideas on man's brain and thought processes. But Gumilevsky errs in placing the physiological aspect of the problem *in opposition* to other aspects which are incomparably more important, and in completely denying the philosophical, ideological and aesthetic roots of the question.

Gumilevsky feels that writers hunt for words "only by groping, through an empirical process", that neither philosophy, psychology, linguistics, nor literary scholarship can help the writer along the difficult path to clarity and expressive simplicity of style, for "they give no objective criterion for determining whether the word in question is the right one".

One cannot agree with such a statement. Such a criterion exists, and philosophy, epistemology and Lenin's theory of reflection point to it. Before reacting with such scepticism to the role epistemology can play in the resolution of stylistic problems and farming them out to physiology, one should recall Lenin's words on true, accurate thinking that reflects objective reality, and of the only true criterion of this truth—human, social practice. If we accept Gumilevsky's point of view, then all of literature, which is also related in the most direct manner to higher nervous activity, would be struck off the list of social phenomena and added to that of physiological ones.

Undoubtedly problems of style, and in particular the question of artistic simplicity, should be resolved as a complex, taking all factors into account, including the teachings of Pavlov. But we should not forget the *main*, determining criteria. Regardless of how essential Pavlov's teachings on higher nervous activity might be for literature, in the end they cannot elucidate the fundamental question of mastery, nor can they bring us closer to an understanding of the vital problems of twentieth century literary development, particularly those tendencies which are opposed to realism.

Listing the numerous high-sounding declarations of literary groups that sprang up in Russia at the turn of the century like mushrooms after a rain, we realise over and over again how distant these "biocosmists", "luminists",

etc., etc. were from the life-giving traditions of the classics of realism and how right it is, in the final analysis, that they were abandoned and forgotten by history. In literary histories and critical works one can find many examples of an anecdotal nature drawn from the manifestos of all sorts of "ists". Let me cite just a few of them which are directly related to our theme.

In their concerted efforts to dispense with realism, the representatives of these movements created their own theories of style and language, all of which rejected the principles of clarity, simplicity and accessibility to the masses.

The futurists pronounced anathemas against both symbolism and realism, claiming without the least foundation that their literature expressed the tastes of the revolutionary masses; they made the most far-fetched efforts to create a style somewhat beyond the limits of common sense. In the essay "The Word as Such", Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh wrote, "Before our time language was required to be clear, pure, honourable, sonorous, pleasant (gentle) to the ear, expressive (vivid, colourful, pithy). . . ."¹ The futurists abandoned all this as hopelessly antiquated and proposed to exchange it for trans-rational language (*zaum*). The essay continues, "Futurist painters are fond of using parts of the body and sections; futurist language-makers—splintered words, half-words and their whimsical, artful combinations (trans-rational language). By such means they achieve the greatest possible expressiveness and that is what distinguishes their language of dynamic modernism, which destroys the stasis of the language of the past. . . ." One can judge the merits of this "expressiveness" by looking at one of Kruchenykh's opuses, a classical example of trans-rational language:

*hole, bol, shol,
finchaway
outcousin
you with boo
r l e p t.*

¹ Quoted from the collection *Ot simbolizma do Oktyabrya. Literaturnye manifesty* (From Symbolism to October. Literary Manifestos), Vol. 1, *Russia*. Compiled by N. L. Brodsky and N. P. Sidorov, Moscow, 1924.

This was the practice. In his "Declaration of Trans-Rational Language" Kruchenykh defended the right of the poet "to express himself, not only in ordinary language (with concepts) but in his own personal (the creator is individual) language, and by means of language that has no definite meaning (not frozen), by 'trans-rational' language". He attempted to show that "trans-rational art is the most concise art both in terms of the interval between perception and reproduction ['economising attention'?—Y.B.] and in terms of form".

In the *First Journal of Russian Futurists* Benedict Livschitz explained in the following words what he meant by a "liquid state of language": "In this state words do not have a precise, finished meaning; a short while ago these were phosphenes—the music of the retina!—now they are fluids—its plastic movements!—changing their form, constantly approaching the things of the 'real' world and constantly moving away from it. These irrational relations between things are not the pain of muteness, but the joy of the first utterance."¹

It is telling that the futurists never denied reproaches issuing from all quarters that their works were incomprehensible and written in code. On the contrary, they felt this was a merit and arrogantly announced that for centuries "the masses were told that poetry is like porridge—that it slips of its own accord into your mouth, is swallowed and digested by itself", but now the futurist trans-rationalists were raining their "speechsounds" like "an agitational blow on the public taste".²

Others strove to keep up with the futurists. "Too much clarity is out of place,"³ announced the cubists. Imaginist Vadim Shershenevich in his eloquently titled "2×2=5" began with the thesis, "The most natural position of the word is upside-down, . . ." and called for the abolition of grammar.

¹ B. Livschitz, "Dubina na golove russkoi kritiki" (A Club on the Head of Russian Criticism), *Futuristy. Pervy zhurnal russkikh futuristov*, No. 1-2, 1914, p. 103.

² S. Tretyakov, "Tribuna Lefa" (The Tribune of Lef), *Lef*, No. 3, 1923, pp. 160-61.

³ *Strelets* (The Archer), First Collection, Petrograd, 1915, p. 207.

Life cast aside these pseudo-innovative schools and clearly demonstrated their ideological and artistic bankruptcy, their connection with the general crisis of bourgeois culture; it opened the way to a genuinely new, genuinely revolutionary, profoundly realistic art. But remnants of the past could still be felt; the twenties too were fraught with a heated ideological and aesthetic struggle, one of whose focal points was the problem of artistic simplicity, the accessibility and affinity of art to the masses.

One has only to recall the members of Lef. We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of their naïve attempts to totally merge art and life, to the point of erasing the boundaries between them. But their militant denial of realism ("realism is in principle hostile to the proletariat"—was not an unfrequent proclamation in their journals), artificial delimitation of "texture" and "ideology" in art which opened the doors to formalism and in fact resulted in a total destruction of the artistic fabric—all this was alien to the masses who sought not experiments for their own sake in literature, but verisimilitude and a depiction of the beauty of the new world.

Clarity and simplicity in literature were also rejected by the advocates of the formal method who began with the hypothesis that poetic language exists and develops in accordance with special laws which have nothing in common with simplicity and clarity; these qualities ostensibly "automatise" poetry and in fact deaden it. In one of his early works the critic Victor Shklovsky wrote, "We have grown too accustomed to insisting that poetic language be comprehensible. The history of art shows (as often as not) that the language of poetry is only half-comprehensible."¹

These propositions are developed in his essay "Art as Device". Seeing the main goal of art as the de-automation of our perception, Shklovsky believes that the best way to achieve it is through "retardation", the deliberate complication of form that leads to the lengthening and intensifying of the process of perception. "And it is precisely for the purpose of returning the sense of life and

¹ V. Shklovsky, *Voskresheniye slova* (The Resurrection of the Word), St. Petersburg, 1914, pp. 13-14.

the ability to feel things, for the purpose of making a stone feel like a stone, that the phenomenon we call art exists. The goal of art is to let us feel a thing by seeing it, rather than by recognising it, and art's main device is making things strange (*ostranenie*), complicating their form, which increases the difficulty and length of the process of perception, for the process of perception in art is valuable in itself and should be lengthened; art is a way to experience the making of things, but what is made in art is of no importance."¹

Attempting to prove that an extremely complicated, unusual form which has been "made strange" is an aesthetic norm, Shklovsky cites examples of the use of foreign languages in national literatures in order to complicate poetic speech (Assyrian use of Sumerian words, Latin in medieval Europe, Arabic words in Persian texts, and the like); he also discusses the "elevated" words in folk songs in this respect, the use of obsolete words in poetic speech and his OPOYAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) colleague L. Yakubinsky's "law of phonetic complication of poetic language in certain cases involving the repetition of identical sounds".²

It is interesting that in attempting to prove his rather far fetched postulates, Shklovsky refers not only to the works of Velimir Khlebnikov, but to those of Pushkin; the latter's frequent use of colloquial speech he sees merely as "a special device for prolonging attention".

Jakobson interprets Pushkin similarly. "We are inclined to speak of Pushkin's light, unobtrusive technique as one of his essential poetic qualities," writes Jakobson, formulating his conception of poetry as "utterances with the stress on expression". "This is not the proper perspective. For us Pushkin's verse is a cliché, and this leads us to regard it as simple. Pushkin's contemporaries did not view it in this way. For example, we find iambic pentameter without caesura smooth and light. Pushkin *felt* it;

¹ *Poetika*, issue 2, Petrograd, 1917, pp. 7-8.

² See L. Yakubinsky, "O zvukakh stikhotvornogo yazyka" (The Sounds of Poetic Language), *Poetika*, issue 1, Petrograd, 1916; "Skopleniye odinakovykh plavnykh v prakticheskom i poeticheskom yazykakh" (The Accumulation of Identical Liquids in Practical and Poetic Language), *Poetika*, issue 2, Petrograd, 1917.

he felt it as a deliberately complicated form, a form representing the disorganisation of that which preceded it."¹

This was the "formal school's" approach to the problem of complexity and simplicity in art.²

Let us return to current events. Today, as never before, it is obvious that the question of artistic simplicity is the question of realism and affinity with the people. The attacks of bourgeois literary criticism and various revisionist aesthetic schools on the realistic method and attempts to "re-examine" realism—primarily socialist realism—in the final analysis are aimed at distracting the artist from the objective truth of historical processes occurring in the world. This motivates the rejection of the "primitive" simplicity of realistic style, the penchant for intricate symbols, abstraction, and subtexts which only appear to be pregnant with meaning, associations devoid of real living and artistic relations, and formalist experiments with language, plot, composition, et. al.

Once again the cult of James Joyce is flaring up. His novel *Ulysses* is claimed to be the literary banner of the age, although even specialists in Joyce have not been able to decipher the many riddles in this book over the span of half a century.

And *Ulysses* is like a comic book, when compared to Joyce's last novel, *Finnegan's Wake* (1939) which is an utter conundrum, a fusion of twelve languages (including dead ones) and the author's own "trans-rational" language. Even the foremost Joyce specialists confess that one can only judge the content approximately by the isolated meaningful islands in the unordered stream of words.

But this circumstance is welcomed with enthusiasm by apologists of decadence. Such features of Joyce's works and those of the French new novel as the destruction of the artistic canvas, a departure from real life into the realm of the subconscious, and a break with the reading public, which is incapable of understanding such compo-

¹ R. Jakobson, *Noveishaya russkaya poeziya*, pp. 4-5.

² We should mention here that the most prominent figures in this school later reappraised their views to a significant degree. Shklovsky, for example, in "A Monument to a Scholarly Mistake" wrote that for him formalism was a stage of the past (*Literaturnaya gazeta*, January 27, 1930). We will discuss this in the next section.

sitions, are proclaimed as the hallmark of a new age in art.¹

Thus in our fight for a realist, profoundly popular art which reflects life boldly and comprehensively, a literature that is close and comprehensible to the working man and reveals a true picture of reality to him, providing lofty aesthetic pleasure; in our fight for the genuine hallmark of what is new in the art of today—socialist realism, we cannot help but conclude that today artistic simplicity is not a secondary, technological, question, nor is it one of taste, but a question inseparable from the world's ideological and artistic struggle for the spirit and mind of modern man.

2. No matter how many theoretical discussions are held on artistic simplicity, no matter how profoundly and thoroughly the problem may be studied, if it is not implemented in creative practice it remains pure scholasticism. After acquiring a theoretical understanding of the problem, the primary task is to shift the centre of gravity to creative practice and thereby make artistic simplicity

¹ These apologists of decadence attack comprehensibility, accessibility. The very word "comprehensible" is called "unscientific", "deceptive", and the question of the relation of art's accessibility to its affinity with the people—"demagoguery". (See, for example, F. Kautman's essay "Modern Art and Realism", in the Czechoslovak journal *Plamen*, No. 9, 1965.) Also telling are the frequent recent attempts at giving new readings of Klara Zetkin's memoirs where Lenin speaks of art's accessibility to the masses. Instead of "It should be understood by these masses", they propose: "It should be understandable to these masses". Commenting on these philosophical "subtleties", G. Nedoshvin notes correctly that a "definite theoretical tendency" is hidden behind them. It is a good thing to correct a translation, but in the process of theorising one should not overlook the essence of the question. This is that "here, too, Lenin is only speaking of the need to make art the property of the people (so that they might understand and love it!). It is neither a challenge to lower the requirements for art, nor advice to disregard whether art is accessible to the people; this should under no circumstances be read into it. In any case there are absolutely no grounds here for ascribing to Lenin any tendencies to justify élitist art. There is nothing more alien to his aesthetic views!" (*Art and the People*, Moscow, 1966, pp. 16-17, in Russian).

and clarity one of the most important criteria in the evaluation of concrete literary phenomena.

The path to this was outlined in the well-known resolution of the CC RCP(B) "On Party Policy in Literature" (1925) where the task of struggling with "prejudices of lordliness in literature" and of creating first rate artistic works close to the masses and "comprehensible to *millions*"¹ was seriously discussed. The importance of this question was confirmed by the extended discussion in many literary journals of the time on the so called "renovation of style".

The style of many works of the time was markedly complex and difficult to understand. Russian literature abounded in experiments in the spirit of Andrei Bely, stylised *skaz* (Evgeny Zamyatin, Boris Pilnyak, among others), fascination with obsolete words, regional and antiquated collocations, as well as a pseudo-romantic chaos and elements of impressionism. In effect the problem of bringing literature closer to many millions of readers disturbed many writers, and rightly so; this was the point of both the discussions about style and the stylistic experimentation of those years.

Many writers of the anthology *How We Write*, published in 1930, including such acknowledged masters as Alexei Tolstoy, Konstantin Fedin and Olga Forsh, were particularly concerned about the questions of a simple style, the struggle against superfluous complexity and false glamour; this was evident in their answers to questionnaires. Veniamin Kaverin took an interesting approach to this problem; he rightly notes that the problem of complexity and simplicity must be examined only in close conjunction with the writer's attitude to reality and to the word. "...Then," writes Kaverin, "the question of complexity becomes a question of the right to complexity, and the question of simplicity—a complex task in the development of Russian prose."

We should not forget such instructive episodes from our literary history. Even today there are still discussions about style, about how to write (and that means—it's the law of creation—both *what* should be written and for

¹ *O partiinoy i sovetskoy pechati. Sbornik dokumentov* (On the Party Press and Soviet Press: Documents), Moscow, 1954, p. 347.

whom). Even today we encounter individual attempts to label the classic traditions of Russian and Soviet literature, traditions of clarity, simplicity, artistic expressiveness and purity of style, antiquated; claims that they do not fit the spirit of the times. Meanwhile they proclaim the advent of the so called modern style based on "dynamism", "laconicism", "intellectualism", increased attention to the subconscious (that is unclear, undefined) processes of the human psyche.

It may seem strange but at times classical historical and literary examples are used to prove the thesis that realism is obsolete. In Dmitry Urnov's *James Joyce and Contemporary Modernism* certain statements made by Gorky on Chekhov's "Lady with the Dog" ("Do you know what you are doing? You are murdering realism"¹) are interpreted as authoritative evidence of the end, the exhaustion of realism, of its entire system of expressive means. Gorky allegedly saw this exhaustion in "the extreme simplicity of the narrative". The scholar believes that the story "Lady with the Dog" marked "a spiral in Russian prose ending the cyclic development from the transparency of Pushkin's prose to the unaffectedness of Chekhov's...".² In other words, simplicity is seen as a synonym for exhaustion.

Gorky did in fact consider "Lady with the Dog" to be a peerless model, a classic example of the fusion of truth and simplicity (he therefore wrote that after Chekhov everything would "no longer seem simple, that is, not truthful"). What does this have to do with realism being "exhausted"? Affirming that "no one could write so simply about such simple things" Gorky only meant that no one could repeat Chekhov's work. We can hardly suspect him of trying to cancel Chekhov's lessons, the meaning of his experience, his achievements in the realistic depiction of life or the experience of classical Russian realism in general. His mention of "the murder" of realism in a somewhat pointed, polemical, and clearly joking manner ("You're knocking off realism...") reflected Gorky's thirst for the heroic, his dream of a new hero who would enter

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* in thirty volumes, Vol. 28, p. 113 (in Russian).

² *Sovremennye problemy realizma i modernizm* (Contemporary Problems of Realism and Modernism), Moscow, 1965, p. 326.

literature from revolutionary reality: "It's true, we need the heroic today. . .".¹

The dialectics of the development of old realism, the process of its enrichment with new means is in fact far more complicated than it seems if one reads Urnov. The "spiral" of which the critic, D. Urnov (who is well known for his scholarly work), speaks did not end with "Lady with the Dog"; Chekhov's achievements showed, not the exhaustion of realism, but its *inexhaustibility*. Colossal new possibilities were dormant in Chekhov's simplicity which was, not only a summing up, but a beginning, a source.²

Other scholars in search of a stylistic feature that fits the spirit of the times emphasise the principle of "intellectualisation". Thus A. Gastev's essay "Movement Toward a Style"³ claims that there is a "crisis of representativeness" in the literature of our days. Identifying representativeness with description and illustrativeness, Gastev contrasts it to "attention to the inner, spiritual world", and states that such traditional features of the classics as "representativeness, intensive imagery, free associations" are exhausted and hopelessly antiquated. Cognition goes into the depths of phenomena, into a world of logical abstractions; accordingly, suggests the critic, literature should reject "immediate observations" and make its subject the "life, development and movement of the intellect".

One can hardly agree. If it rejects "immediate observations" and representativeness literature would not only cease to be a form of artistic cognition with its origins in

¹ Gorky, *op. cit.*, Vol. 28, p. 113.

² We cannot refrain from the temptation of adding one more judgment (true, one made some time ago); it has to do with the "exhaustion" of Russian classical realism, and concerns L. Tolstoy: "...From the day he conceived of *War and Peace* and since its completion, he has so immeasurably outgrown his contemporaries in all other positive respects that on the path of truthful, so to speak, perfected realism—nothing else can approach him. He has no peer in this field, for each artistic school, like all things in nature, has limits and a point of saturation, which cannot be exceeded." These are the words of K. Leontyev uttered in 1890. [K. Leontyev, *O romnakh grata L. N. Tolstogo* (The Novels of Count Tolstoy), Moscow, 1911, p. 15.]

³ *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 16, 1960.

direct, living sensation, but would break or fatally weaken its bonds with the masses whose healthy aesthetic taste could hardly be reconciled to the exchange of fullblooded images of life for the abstract "movement of the intellect".

As far as attempts to formulate the features of modern style are concerned, one is struck by their purely speculative nature. As a rule these attempts go no farther than fixing of certain features which the authors feel are evidence of the formation of a new style. But somehow it isn't convincing. We are told, for example, that contemporary art is concise, laconic, expressive and based on conventions. But are these features alien to classical art? Cannot Pushkin's *Tales of Ivan Belkin* or Chekhov's stories serve as models of artistic laconicism? Do we not find elements of expressiveness and convention in the works of Gogol? So the essence of the problem is to determine a new quality, a new ideological and artistic function of these stylistic devices, to relate them to those general features of the modern artistic thought of the people which affect the nature of art.

Is there any relation between such concepts as style and modernity? Can we speak of a stylistic unity in modern literature, a unity marked by certain general traits of the epoch?

First we must realise that the very formulation of the question is conventional, as is the term "modern style". And not only because of the infinite variety and wealth of modern art, a factor, undoubtedly, which in and of itself makes it very difficult to discern general stylistic tendencies. The main thing is that in modern world art there is no unity of ideological and aesthetic positions, nor can there be any; in the struggle between the socialist and bourgeois ideologies, which never ceases for a moment, literature is one of the major weapons. Naturally the fundamental differences between the literature of socialist realism and bourgeois literature (the fact that the latter is not a unified phenomenon is another question) appear, not only in the sphere of content, ideas and artistic method, but in the means of their embodiment, in poetics. From this perspective it is senseless to seek actual unity in the complex, contradictory interweaving of different styles of today's literature.

This fundamentally important element should not, of course, overshadow those objective stylistic tendencies in literature which are the result of certain general processes characteristic of modern life. Literature will be truly modern when it can aesthetically assimilate new tendencies of the modern world; such assimilation is directly and lawfully connected to the working-out and accumulation of new expressive means, new stylistic features.

When we speak of realism we are least concerned with that frozen, static phenomenon which is an eternal part of all times and historical and social conditions, the conventional antipode of "antirealism". Realism is constantly developing, growing richer and increasing its ability to comprehend the modern world. Naturally this results in an increased, improved arsenal of expressive means. It would be false to claim that the principle of artistic simplicity, despite its unquestionable methodological significance, totally absorbs all the wealth of style, all the richness of literature, particularly the literature of our time. Reality has infinite variety and its depiction requires an inexhaustible arsenal of artistic means. The art that forgets that "Mirgorod has changed, and the Khorol River is not the same" (Pavlo Tychina) and that "new life thirsts for new words" (Maxim Rylsky), the art that does not constantly perfect its means of the artistic comprehension of the world is doomed to hopeless provincialism.

This was true in all times, and in our times, in an epoch of a scientific and technological revolution unprecedented in volume and its influence on man's spiritual life, in an epoch of intensively accelerating and increasingly complex social processes—this is truer yet. Yes, we reject the false "discoveries" of decadence and do not agree that the so called "telegraphic style" and other suspicious innovations are the universal style of the twentieth century. But we have not the right to ignore the fact that the changes in today's life persistently pose the question of *new means of the artistic depiction of life*. This is no imagined task, but the requirement of the times.

There are tremendous changes in the material and spiritual life of the people; the very concept of popular literature and art is constantly acquiring new facets. This process cannot but directly affect the stylistic quests of writers. Stylistic quests in the art of socialist realism are

based on such principles as the assimilation and creative development of realistic traditions; an unbreakable bond with the life of the people, which enriches art both by lending it new content and new forms; a high receptivity to modern life, its rhythms, colours and intonations; and an organic hostility to all sorts of "leftist" tricks. These quests are aimed at bringing literature closer to the life of the people and consolidating its popular base; they are linked with the writer's ability to perceive the birth of the new in society and to depict it realistically, with artistic truthfulness, and *intelligibly*. The fundamental, basic principles of socialist realist art, which have been tested by life itself, above all such principles as affinity with the people, realism, veracity, and *artistic simplicity*, are unyielding and will remain so as long as such concepts as art and people exist.

The question of the direction and perspectives of modern stylistic quests becomes particularly crucial with respect to the education of young writers. We have no reason to be alarmed about the influence of decadence on young writers. The great majority of those who are entering the ranks of Soviet literature have a thorough knowledge of life and have both feet firmly planted on the soil of realism. One should not, however, underestimate the fact that in their attempts to work out an individual style, taste and sympathies they often grope their way. We know that even literary scholars from time to time see the spectre of "the exhaustion of realism"; what then can we assume to be the case with a young hothead? The young writer himself has to "digest" what has already been overcome and discarded in a complex, at times painful, struggle. This process is not all that simple. This is why some young writers who have not yet realised the power of simple, clear, uniquely right and necessary word pay tribute to artificial complexities, mannerism and verbal fireworks. At times it is considered good form to make a deprecating moue at the sound of the word "simplicity", which through lack of thought or education is identified with primitiveness. One poet (true, long past the category of "young") even composed a programmatic poem poking fun at those who campaign for simplicity because they themselves cannot understand complicated things.

This means an even greater responsibility rests on the shoulders of the literary critic. Unfortunately criticism has at times devoted much attention and effort to scholastic theorising and failed to occupy itself with such a vitally important poetical problem as artistic simplicity.

Among works where this problem has been more or less fundamentally examined, one must count I. Kozlov's article "On Conciseness in Prose".¹

Kozlov expressed many interesting thoughts on conciseness, which he views as one of the most important artistic criteria, and in this connection he made many valuable observations on the prose of the time. But he only marked the beginning of a theoretical discussion by confining himself to a narrow problem: conciseness in the novel. The critic notes that poetry, stories and drama oblige the artist to be brief due to formal features and a relatively small volume. The broad base of the novel seems to spare him the necessity of being concise and offer a tempting opportunity to "roam at will".

But is this not an artificial formulation of the question? If we agree that in small forms brevity and conciseness appear of themselves and only the author of long novels should, so to speak, curb himself, are we not reducing the concept of brevity to a purely formal category of length, the volume of a work? True, in his general theoretical formulations Kozlov does in fact define conciseness as part of a larger, more significant aesthetic problem. "Conciseness," he writes, "should be viewed as the correspondence between the form and conception of a work, the ability of the artist to economise on artistic means to the maximum degree and yet give a realistic total picture of the subject, showing everything necessary and saying nothing superfluous." What is this if not an attempt to define the principle of artistic simplicity? Unfortunately in his concrete analysis of several prose works Kozlov limits himself to the criterion of length.

There can be no doubt that artistic simplicity cannot be separated from conciseness, laconicism, etc. We should, however, stress that this does not imply the mere length of a work, the number of pages, stanzas or words; in other words; we do not have in mind quantitative, formal

¹ See *Novy mir*, No. 6, 1955.

factors of the type used by G. Shengeli, for example, when he attempted to express the simplicity of Pushkin with the help of the coefficient 1.35,¹ but fundamental criteria connected to the profundity and thoroughness of the artistic comprehension of reality.

This question, incidentally, does not apply only to poetics; the concept of simplicity is used in structural linguistics as well. For Noam Chomsky it is the key to the choice of grammars.² But particularly interesting from the point of view of the problem at hand is the application of this concept in the logic of science, the field that is concerned with the study of the function of scientific theories. American logician Hans Reichenbach proposed that we distinguish two sorts of simplicity: descriptive and inductive. The first relates to the purely formal sphere and is, as some Soviet scholars note, the simplicity within equivalent descriptions (say, in the measurement of length it is sometimes simpler to use centimetres or metres rather than inches and feet). But this sort of simplicity does not lead to the cognition of reality or a deeper grasp of life. Inductive simplicity allows for totally different possibilities. This is not a formal criterion, but one concerning the essence of scientific theory and therefore able to serve as an index of its effectiveness.

With regard to art one should apparently speak of inductive simplicity as the dynamic capacity of a given system of expressive means to reveal the maximum possibilities for the most capacious, full, artistically "expedient", and at the same time the most impressive in its emotional effect, reproduction of scenes of reality.

Thus we are speaking of *artistic laconicism*, whose power was realised by the ancient Greeks who highly valued the simplicity, accessibility and conciseness of the speeches of Spartan orators as opposed to the grandiloquent Athenians.

The unique models of artistic laconicism include folk poetry, ancient literary texts and the works of classical authors.

¹ See G. Shengeli, *Dva pamyatnika* (Two Literary Monuments), Petrograd, 1918.

² See N. Chomsky, *Three Models for the Description of Language*, IRE Trans., Vol. I, T. 2, No. 3, 1956, pp. 113-24.

Folklorists and those who love and value folk poetry long ago refuted the idea that folk songs are artistically inferior and primitive. Those who take the trouble to learn about folk songs are astonished by the high degree of emotional and intellectual intensity which is achieved by improbably simple artistic means, by the artlessness, the absence of superficial effects, false significances and complexity. A. M. Gorky, an expert on Russian folk art, wrote, "Simple words contain the greatest wisdom; proverbs and songs are always short but contain enough wit and feeling for whole books."

Indeed whether we consider Russian historical songs, songs of thieves and coachmen, sorrowful prison songs, or love songs full of tenderness—all the wealth reflecting the long history of the people and their sensitive spirit—we cannot help but admire the poetic gift of the people, their ability to say so much in a single line, to touch the secret strings of the human heart with a simple word and a laconic, precise image.

One model of genuine artistic laconicism is the immortal twelfth century Russian epic *The Lay of Igor's Host*. Powerful images and colourful pagan symbolism are organically combined with truly ingenious simplicity. This is the secret of the power of the famous lament of Yaroslavna which has inspired more than one poet. Note the laconic linguistic means that are used by the author to recreate the tense, anxious atmosphere of the day before Igor's fateful battle:

*Oh, Russian land!
You are already beyond the hill.

Long lingered night,
Then the dawn loosed its light.
Mist wreathed the fields
And the nightingale's juggling yielded
To the magpie's bright babble.
Scartlet Russian shields
Flashed and rattled
Seeking honour for themselves
And glory for their Prince.*

No wonder that Alexei Tolstoy compares medieval Russian literature to *The Lay of Igor's Host*. He confesses that his knowledge of the so called "torture protocols" of the seventeenth century was a revelation to him and helped to make extraordinarily productive discoveries about the Russian language. Free of dead Church Slavonisms and false literariness this language conveyed the tale of each tortured man with striking conciseness and precision. "The judicial (torture) acts did not shun 'vulgar' speech," writes Tolstoy. "Rus told its tales, moaned, lied, and howled in pain and fear. The language was pure, simple, precise, figurative, pliable, as though intended for art."¹

The problem of laconicism is closely connected to the language of a work of literature, with such concepts as the struggle against verbosity and flowery style. This in essence is the gist of examples illustrating the pains taken by classical writers to perfect the style of their works. N. Stepanov makes some interesting observations on Dostoevsky's manuscripts in his essay "How Dostoevsky Worked on His Novels";² he analyses fragments of the fair copy of *The Youth* with the author's corrections and concludes that "Dostoevsky's corrections consist primarily of abbreviation, making phrases more concise, discarding individual pieces and repetitions".

As we mentioned earlier, however, it would be incorrect to reduce the problem of laconicism to the struggle for concise phrases, the rejection of superfluous words and repetitions, etc. Laconicism, as the most important prerequisite and *first step toward artistic simplicity* concerns not only language, but all elements of a work of literature in their totality. Among the features of artistic simplicity is a plot that reveals the characters in the most natural, complete fashion possible; composition where each scene, each episode is dictated by artistic necessity; and detail with such expressive power that in one stroke it conveys the author's thought and describes the object.

Obviously only by posing the question in this way can we comprehend the essence of artistic laconicism, not

¹ A Tolstoy, *Collected Works* in ten volumes, Vol. 10, Moscow, 1961, pp. 141-42 (in Russian).

² See *Literaturnaya ucheba*, No. 6, 1932.

only in novellas or short stories, but in the work of such masters of sweeping canvases, throngs of characters, a broad grasp of life and unhurried epic narrative as Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Galsworthy, Thomas Mann, Sholokhov and Leonov. Tolstoy's long, syntactically complex periods, frequent digressions and philosophical meditations appear to be the result of "non economical" style. But this is only on first, careless glance. In fact these are models of laconicism for they are *artistically necessary* for the fullest, most perfect embodiment of the author's conception, for a profound revelation of human characters, and the essence of social phenomena.

One can only reveal the aesthetic nature of laconicism, artistic simplicity, by relating it to imagery. In his efforts to reproduce reality as accurately and fully as possible, and to aesthetically influence the reader, each writer (according to his talent and view of the world, of course) finds the images which in maximally condensed form reveal his idea. This is the shortest, *simplest* path to the mind and heart of the reader.

This is the relation of simplicity to imagery, and to the problem of truth in art as well. Artistic simplicity is the figurative representation of reality which comes as close as possible to the living truth and gives the truest aesthetic cognition of life; in other words, it is the most *precise imagery*. Herein lies the aesthetic nature of simplicity. Accordingly the problem cannot be confined to style, narrative devices, and so on. It is directly related to the artist's aesthetic attitude toward reality, and becomes one of the most important aspects of the problem of realism and artistic truth.

The nineteenth century Russian critic Belinsky called simplicity the beauty of truth. These words (directly echoed in Gorky's formula "as simple as the truth") precisely express the unity of the cognitive and aesthetic aspects of simplicity in art.

Naturally there is no direct relation between imagery and artistic simplicity. Not every figurative construction results in simplicity. At times the opposite is true; too many images make the perception of a work more difficult, the path from the artist's conception to the reader's mind and heart turns out to be cluttered. This was true of Russian imaginism where each image was transformed

into something sufficient in itself, and it was true of art influenced by expressionism. During the formation of Soviet prose many writers had an abundance of imagery, but sometimes this resulted, not in simplicity, but in extraordinary complexity which was, in particular, the direct result of too much imagery.

On the other hand Pushkin believed that the purpose of narration was "simply to retell"; Chekhov recommended writing exclusively in phrases like "A man sat on the grass"; Paul Valéry dreamed that when it was raining one would write, "It is raining", and so on and so forth. How should we understand this? It would seem that certain distinguished writers believe that the path to simplicity is not via imagery, but, on the contrary, by rejecting imagery, by writing an imageless prose.

But although Pushkin and Chekhov seem on first glance to call for imageless art, this is only apparent. The simplicity of "a simple retelling" is not the simplicity of sheer information devoid of images. "It is raining" becomes a literary phrase when it is put in a given semantic, emotional context, when it has an artistic function. In such cases it already has a figurative character. Chekhov's prose is not "imageless", but the imagery is subtle, subdued, transparent, and built on halftones and a subtext. The simplicity of such prose is the result of an extraordinarily precise, economical *selection* of descriptive, figurative means. In principle it opposes the simplicity of, say, the verses of futurist poet M. Semenko: "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday..." etc. The principle of imageless information, the "naming" of objects and phenomena which would seem the most simple cannot give the effect of *artistic* simplicity, for there is no idea or aesthetic meaning behind this list of the days of the week, no higher purpose, no perceptible effort on the artist's part to select real phenomena and expressive means. The device remains a device; the "simplest" simplicity turns out to be the other side of formalism, a sort of "trans-rationalism" (*zaum*).

In considering artistic simplicity we must remember that within the boundaries of realism, including the literature of socialist realism, artists with profoundly different and unique creative personalities are at work; they have different perceptions of reality and among them are

many masters whose work has a certain degree of complexity. It would be sufficient to name the plays of Brecht, the poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky, Pablo Neruda, Paul Eluard, Nazim Hikmet, Julian Tuwim and others. Among Russian Soviet poets, apart from Demyan Bedny, Sergei Esenin, Alexander Tvardovsky, Mikhail Isakovsky, we must include Nikolai Aseyev, Marina Tsvetaeva, Boris Pasternak, Vladimir Lugovskoy and Nikolai Zabolotsky, each with an individual, at times extremely complex style.

It is also important to stress that in speaking of artistic simplicity we are not referring to a comb for styling of all creative individuals according to a single standard, not an artificial yardstick designed for only a certain group of writers with a patent on simplicity and affinity to the people, but a *tendency*, an *objective law* of realistic art, and finally, the aesthetic position of the artist revealed each time in some unique individual way through his work.

Typical in this respect is the creative experience of many major writers (particularly those who began writing before the October Revolution) who have travelled the difficult path from complex writing to genuinely realistic simplicity. It would be enough to compare the Fedin who wrote *Cities and Years* and the Fedin who wrote *Early Joys and Conflagration*; or one could mention Leonov's path from the "tormented bookish romanticism" (Gorky) of his early stories to the strictly realist prose of *Russian Forest*; or Pasternak's evolution from complexity and an oversaturation of imagery in the tens and twenties to his quest for "unheard of simplicity", which he achieved in his best poems in the collection *When It Clears Up*.

Even in the works of such a leading modernist as T. S. Eliot one can see the trend towards simplicity. Not only are his early works complex, they are obscure, and consciously encoded in the extreme, which reflects Eliot's determination to isolate his work, and his conviction that under the conditions of modern civilisation "you have to say the thing the difficult way".¹ Later Eliot takes a somewhat different approach. Already in 1933 he writes of his

¹ *Writers at Work. The Paris Review Interviews*, Second Series, New York, 1963, p. 105.

wish to say things more simply. Thirty years later he compares his later *Four Quartets* with his earlier work *The Waste Land* and notes with satisfaction that the *Quartets* are simpler and easier to understand. Naturally this is a relative simplicity: *Four Quartets* do not make easy reading. One could also claim that this profoundly religious, pessimistic work seems directed more to old fashioned classicist rules than to true simplicity, and is a sort of challenge to realism. The Soviet literary scholar Yassen Zasursky writes, "The poet turned to classicism . . . in an attempt to simplify poetic form but did not move to change the chaos of the content which is tantamount to an effort to order disorder."¹ Despite the necessary stipulations this tendency toward simplification in Eliot's creative development is worthy of note.

We should not unify and reduce to a common denominator the paths of very different artists, and it would be a mistake to force their quests into one common pattern. Let me repeat that we are only speaking of *tendencies* in their development.

Maxim Rylsky very convincingly formulated this tendency in his poem "The Art of Poetry". The venerable poet sums up a long artistic life with this confession:

*I had to toil for many years
Before I saw that poetry
Means simple words that strike the ear
And luminescent clarity;
No pretty mannered forgeries
Or petty passions should obscure
With thunderous trivialities
The heart that reigns true and pure.*

This linking of simplicity and precise clarity is characteristic. For Rylsky simplicity is not a formal feature of poetry but a means for the most truthful, precise, representation of reality. The prominent Polish writer Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz reflects along similar lines. "Above all," he

¹ Y. Zasursky, "T. S. Eliot, poet besplodnoi zemli" (T. S. Eliot, Poet of the Waste Land), in T. S. Eliot, *Besplodnaya zemlya* (The Waste Land), Moscow, 1971, p. 10.

writes, "I strive for maximum simplicity." He confesses that it is extremely difficult to attain the sort of true simplicity that reveals profundity, but this is the only productive course; efforts to reveal our complex reality by means of artificially complicated forms have no creative perspectives.

By no means should we simplify the problem of simplicity (I do hope the reader will forgive my involuntary play on words). Simplicity in art has nothing in common with primitiveness or elementariness. Alas, in the name of simplicity elements of false folk primitivism, comic book vulgarity and drabness have always attempted and attempt to penetrate art. One is alarmed (or at least literary criticism should be) by the widespread imitations of folk songs, *chastushkas* and urban romances, for these are facilitated by the powerful mass media, to our great misfortune. Literary clichés, too, are the ineradicable scourge of art. Do they not hide behind the mask of "mass literature", "comprehensibility"? Is not the reason that the cliché has so firmly saturated our literature, that it sits so confidently astride it, because it is the first thing to come into the mind and leave the tongue, that is the "simplest" thing of all?

In his essay "Thoughts on a Master", Lunacharsky speaks out against "false complexity", flowery speech, and intricacy, which are, as he stresses, "incompatible with mastery", but at the same time he also warns against "false simplicity". "*Eugene Onegin*," he writes, "is relatively simple. . . . But it can hardly be called the same sort of simplicity that we see in *The Tale of the Fisherman and the Golden Fish*. We must discuss this because in certain cases mastery is beginning to be conceived of by people (who think they are being democratic) as the ability to be extraordinarily simple; but some kinds of simplicity are worse than thievery. We know Lenin's indignation at those propagandists who in their attempts to compensate for the allegedly low cultural level of the workers speak to them as one would to a child, replacing truths that are overwhelming in their integrity, infinitely important truths, with pitiful copies, oversimplified likenesses. . . . In this sense we can say that the artist too should strive for the greatest possible accessibility, that the ability to be universally comprehended without re-

ducing the scope of content, is an ability of tremendous significance."¹

Artistic simplicity is one thing; the question of the simple and complex structure of images is another thing altogether. These concepts by no means coincide in all aspects. Complex associations which often form the basis of the artistic image (particularly in poetry) and reflect the complexity of both objective reality and the author's subjective attitude to the world around him, should not be thoughtlessly held against the artist. To a significant degree these associations are inherent to the very nature of the image.

Lugovskoy's collection *Blue Spring* has fairly complicated poetic images, structurally speaking. Thus in the marvellous poem "Campfires" the collective image of the campfires of revolutionary youth is formed from associations, memories and reminiscences which would seem to be very distant indeed:

*I dream of campfires
In the spring steppes of Zaporozhye.
I hear the horses snorting;
I smell horses
In heat;
I hear the ancient song
of days
We shall never forfeit.*

*I see the blood red poppy
From Perekop that has brought
Spring to our skies,
And over the horses
Like a Tartar crescent
I see the moon ride.*

.

¹ A. V. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works* in eight volumes, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1964, pp. 559-60 (in Russian). Interestingly enough Lunacharsky is polemicising with none other than V. Shklovsky. The latter who earlier campaigned for maximum complexity and difficulty of form, now attempted without total success to re-examine his OPOYAZ positions in the article "The Law of Simplicity" (*Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 5, 1933).

*The blood-stained knife
Of the dusk,
The shivering steppe,
The tracks of Makhno's carts
Bearing guns;
And beneath our horses' hooves
The steely surface of the ice
Rings.*

.

*...An icy star
And the washed-out walls
Of trenches, in the clay,
The smell of iodine and salt
That drifts each night
From Sivash bay....*

The imagery is complex, the strokes vivid, bold and at times startling. Yet on the whole "Campfires" could serve as an example of genuine realistic simplicity, clarity of poetic thought, harmony of form and content.

From this example and many others we see that frequently the poetic efforts to obtain "utter simplicity" are combined with complex, formal (but not formalist!) quests and poetic experiments; these are not necessarily self-sufficient, but are based on an unusual use of tradition. This is the nature of the dialectic of the development of major, original talent.

Enemies of socialist realism arrogantly taunt our literature for "primitivism", and "naturalist" descriptions. But the profoundest, fullest descriptions of reality and the cognition of its dialectic complexity and contradictions are born of socialist realism, which gives a true and not apparent freedom to the creative individuality of the artist and is a prerequisite to an unlimited variety of artistic means. As for the many varieties of modernism, despite their proclamations of "atypicality" and "intellectualism" in fact their works are typical, primitive and one-dimensional, for they are based on an aesthetics that does not strive for truth, or for a truthful artistic depiction of reality, but abandons the major, complex problems which life sets before art.

Moreover, on the whole, modernist art is anti-aesthetic, and hostile to the healthy human conception of beauty, for its programme includes tricks, conundrums, the sort of "trans-rationality" and verbal conjuring that Lunacharsky felt was the extreme expression of "the mental and emotional bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie and their bohemians in Europe and Russia, for that matter".¹

In socialist realism the problem of artistic simplicity accordingly plays a very important part for it is connected to the categories of the *beautiful* and of *closeness to the people*, to our conception of the tasks of an art called upon to reveal the truth about the world to man; an art that rouses him to join the struggle, brings him joy and aesthetic pleasure.

¹ A. V. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works* in eight volumes, Vol. 2, p. 254 (in Russian).

THAT IMPORTUNATE
SALIERI...

Music I

Dissected like a corpse.

Proved its harmonies by mathematics.

Pushkin, "Mozart and Salieri"

The modern specialist in the humanities is torn by contradictions. Naturally he is filled with pride for his subject, and, at the same time, is slightly embarrassed at belonging to the clan of (as he sees it) persecuted "lyricists", rather than being one of respected "physicists". He hurls thunderbolts at men of science and makes sarcastic comments on the creative pretensions of cybernetic robots; he likes nothing better than to meditate on a branch of lilacs and a volume of Pushkin in the cabin of a spaceship. . . .

But behind it all one senses the uncertainty, the fear of lagging behind the currents of the times, the pious, albeit well-hidden awe of the dilettante before omnipotent mathematics.

Polish writer Stanislaw Lem has given an apt description of this remarkable characteristic manifested by a scholar, currently involved in the humanitarian sciences. Notes Lem, "He likes the exact sciences and would love to acquire their touchstone—the experiment that makes generalisations 'unstable' (although he may be a bit wary of this). Working with unsolvable problems which can neither be given up nor answered is just like guessing the answer to mysteries—nothing comes of it, yet it is dignified because the mysteries are eternal; and for some thinkers it seems to have a value in itself. . . ."¹

So a man who thinks in this way undertakes to solve an eternal mystery. He is eager "to prove harmonies by mathematics" and in his enthusiasm, as often is the case with neophytes, goes much farther than his colleagues in the exact sciences.

¹ Quoted from *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 8, 1969, pp. 49-50.

The latter, by the way, do not hasten to abandon art to the auspices of the electronic Calliope. On the contrary they are full of piety for art. One recalls Einstein's lifelong passion for the music of Haydn, Mozart and Bach; one of his contemporaries notes that the "architectonic beauty" of Bach's music reminded him of the harmonious, higher logic of mathematic constructions. We are all familiar with the great physicist's confession that Dostoevsky "did more for him than Gauss".¹ Another leading twentieth century physicist, Niels Bohr values art for its unique capacity to "remind us of harmonies inaccessible to systematic analysis". Art's advantage, rather than its weakness, lies for Bohr in its "rejection of exact definitions characteristic of scientific communication, giving greater leeway to the play of fantasy".² Academician A. Kolmogorov, acknowledged leader of those mathematicians who rely to a large extent on artistic materials in their experiments, says—not without a shade of admiration—that only a poet is able to take 400 letters, a message of negligible length from the viewpoint of contemporary technology, and "create . . . a channel of communication, of direct intercourse with his contemporaries and descendants", to tear down "the boundaries of space and time".³ The father of cybernetics, Norbert Wiener affirms a similar idea when he stresses the unique ability of the human brain to handle poems, novels and paintings, "material that any computer would have to reject as formless".⁴

But hotheads haven't time for subtleties. Our scholars in the humanities are bustling about and running ahead. Like the author of Chekhov's "Letter to an Educated Neighbour" they are intoxicated with the most modern terminology: algorithm, model, construct, invariant . . . They organise debates, read lectures and write pamphlets. They're busy. . . .

¹ See A. Moshkovsky, *Albert Einshtein. Besedy s Einshteinom o teorii otnosityelnosti i obshchey sisteme mira* (Albert Einstein: Conversations with Einstein on the Theory of Relativity and the General System of the World), Moscow, 1922, pp. 200-02; B. G. Kuznetsov, *Einshtein* (Einstein), Moscow, 1963, p. 86.

² Niels Bohr, *Atomphysik und menschliche Erkenntnis*, Braunschweig, 1958, S. 8.

³ Quoted from A. Kondratov, *Matematika i poeziya* (Mathematics and Poetry), Moscow, 1962, p. 48.

⁴ Norbert Wiener, *God and Golem*, Cambridge, 1964, p. 73.

It is neither commendable nor rewarding to have a serious discussion with such people, yet we cannot maintain utter silence. Unfortunately the mass audience gets its information about contemporary developments in the interrelations between the natural and social sciences primarily through such people; naturally the information is distorted. One must distinguish between idle talk on "cybernetic" themes and serious research aimed at further perfecting the methodology of the social sciences, between empty outbursts and truly scholarly discussions.

Such discussions are more likely to intensify rather than to die out. There is no sense in ignoring this. Here it is not so much a matter of the natural sciences putting "pressure" on the humanities, but of internal requirements of the latter, the growth of role and significance of which we are increasingly aware of. In the opinion of French ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, either the twenty-first century will be an era of *social sciences* or it will not be at all.¹ Perhaps this is put too strongly; but although many agree, it is not the main thing.

The main question is the *nature* of the social sciences on the threshold of a new century.

Lévi-Strauss believes that the only way to the promised land is through precision. "We cannot place the exact and natural sciences on one side of the fence and the humanities on the other. . . . In essence *there is only one approach*: the approach of the exact and natural sciences to the study of the universe. And the humanities must strive to rely on this when they study man as a part of the universe."²

Posing the question in this way is somewhat impressive. Indeed all of us are tired of approximations, subjectivism, personal predilections, and pseudo-scientific writings. But how are we to achieve the desired precision?

There are some who believe that the degree of precision of the social sciences is totally dependent on the degree to which they are mathematicised. This leads to the conclusion that only a universal quantitative measure, only

¹ See *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 6, 1968.

² Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Criteria of Science in the Social and Human Disciplines", *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XVI, Paris, No. 4, 1964, p. 550.

mathematical and statistical methods, can bring literary scholarship closer to the exact sciences.

Many scholars warn against too free or broad an interpretation of Marx's view on the need to use mathematical methods. Quantitative criteria have a very narrow field of application in the study of so "subjective" a phenomenon as artistic creativity where social and personal factors play so great a part and the object of investigation is so complex, multiform, elusive and ephemeral. "The search for mathematically precise truths in art," notes A. Bushmin, "is extraordinarily difficult. Even when it ends successfully we find that the 'precise truth' arrived at is not all-encompassing, but rather a sparse, infinitely minuscule piece of the whole."¹ What we get is a naked, abstract formula. Marx scoffed at the rush to obtain such formulas in the social sciences.

This does not, however, dispense with the problem. No matter how one mocks those scholars in the humanities who flirt with mathematics or disputes (as one must) extremes, we cannot help but recognise a fairly powerful trend in the social sciences—in literary scholarship and poetics in particular. Throughout the world philosophers and aestheticians are preoccupied with structuralism and the study of art as a semiotic system. Whether we like it or not a structuralist school is taking shape in the Soviet Union as well. Symposiums and conferences are held to discuss the use of semiotic, mathematical, and probability-statistical methods in literary scholarship. Collections of articles and transactions—a whole library on structural poetics demanding an object-analysis and only that, but no hostile pamphlets or gestures of noble indignation—are now coming out. In short we have a perfect right to paraphrase Belinsky: everyone's talking about structure, everyone's asking for structure. . . .

It is high time for theoreticians to inject a few words of common sense into this discussion.

But they are still evasive. Either we see superficial, foggy references to structuralism, accompanied by numerous stipulations which slur things over; or sporadic out-

¹ A. S. Bushmin, *Metodologicheskiye voprosy literaturovedcheskikh issledovaniy* (Methodological Questions of Studies in Literary Criticism), Leningrad, 1969, pp. 81-82.

bursts of "romantic" criticism which for all its noble motives still remains emotional; or finally spiritless discussions in journals which, without exaggeration, go on for years since their organisers are obsessed with preserving equilibrium of the antipodal positions.

Several years ago an extremely interesting book by a scholar from the GDR, Robert Weimann, on the New Criticism was published in Russian translation; it traces the roots and history of bourgeois formalist literary studies for more than half a century.¹ Weimann covers a wide range of material and represents a profound investigation of various modifications of formalism; his work is thoroughly scientific, if punctilious in its acknowledgements of the services actually rendered by certain New Critics, and sharply polemical and definite in its appraisals.

How useful this sort of work on, say, the Russian formalist school of the twenties, on OPOYAZ (The Society for the Study of Poetic Language) would be to us! When we do mention this school, to be frank, we confine ourselves to references to discussions of years long past and statements that life has shown the unsoundness of this movement. In fact life also shows that many of OPOYAZ's ideas are extraordinarily *resilient*—a fact which deserves some consideration.

It is not sufficient to simply reject a scholarly conception. First we must thoroughly study the subject until we understand it. We have not yet done this. We have yet to examine the social, philosophical, ideological roots of structuralism, its aesthetic nature: define the limits of the application of structural-semiotic methods, their "coefficient of productivity". We must determine whether there are any points of contiguity between these methods and the dialectical method, between structuralism and Marxism (a thesis stubbornly maintained by many structuralists).

Perhaps even more important is the need to give *our own* answer to the question regarding the perspectives of the humanitarian sciences, in particular literary scholarship. If Claude Lévi-Strauss is right and the twenty-first

¹ See Robert Weimann, "*Novaya kritika*" i razvitiye burzhuaznogo literaturovedeniya. Istoriya i kritika noveishikh metodov interpretatsii (The New Critics and the Development of Bourgeois Literary Scholarship: A History and Criticism of New Methods of Interpretation), Moscow, 1965.

century is fated to become an era of social sciences, then we also have an interest in determining the future of these disciplines. In principle, we know the answer. We proceed on the hypothesis that Marxist-Leninist methodology provides the most productive basis for literary scholarship and that such a methodology will bring us closest to a precise knowledge of art. But this general idea is not enough. Truth is concrete, and we will have to roll up our sleeves and work out the most pressing problems of the methodology of literary scholarship: among them, as it happens, are the problems of structuralism and semiotics. We confess that we have not spent a great deal of time on these problems. The theoretical, methodological tempests of the twenties and thirties and recent flash revivals have subsided, leaving a protracted period of silence.

Perhaps I should also mention that I will only touch on certain aspects of these problems.

I

Roman Jakobson called Russian formalism of the 1920s "the infantile disorder of structuralism".

We should pay attention to the opinion of Jakobson, who is an authority on the subject. Among other things he has said: "If literary scholarship wants to become a scientific discipline it must acknowledge the 'device' as its only hero."¹ Subsequently he wrote, "I don't know how one can work in the sphere of language or art and not attempt to grasp structures. Those who discuss other things are involved in idle discussions, not in science."² Between these two utterances lie fifty years in the life of a formerly active member of OPOYAZ, today one of the acknowledged *maîtres* of structuralism.

OPOYAZ. . . . Only yesterday it seemed that this page of our literary history was thoroughly forgotten. OPOYAZ was rarely mentioned, except in specialised publications, and most frequently tied to the epithet "notorious". Today it would be hard to deny the interest in Russian formalism. Books and articles are published abroad on this subject;

¹ R. Jakobson, *Noveishaya russkaya poeziya. Nabrosok pervy* (Modern Russian Poetry, First Draft), Prague, 1921, p. 11.

² See *La Pensée*, No. 135, 1967.

the number of Soviet books on formalism is also increasing, not to mention the references, allusions and citations—now considered good form—which are scattered throughout many books on literature. No doubt some of this interest is merely due to the fact that structuralism is in vogue, but it would be foolish to attribute the entire trend to fashion. Facts are facts. Today those tendencies which we lump together as structuralism (not making the necessary distinctions) are being reactivated in contemporary scholarship. Structuralists not only do not conceal their ties with the formal school; they make a point of proclaiming the fact. OPOYAZ's theoretical treasury is universally acknowledged as a source of literary structuralism.

In their "dissembling" of art (according to V. Shklovsky, OPOYAZ members would say, "We're not dethroning art of the past: we're dissembling it for analysis...")¹ the formalists were not without predecessors. Zhirmunsky explains, "We received the living impulses for methodological investigations into literary form from symbolist theoreticians. . . . Foremost among them was Andrei Bely."²

Of course the formalists had little interest in the religious, idealistic philosophy of symbolism; they firmly rejected the poetic theories of Potebnaya which the Russian symbolists, according to Bely, subscribed to. While acknowledging that the symbolists revived interest in the problems of poetics, the members of OPOYAZ maintained that "symbolism could not introduce a new poetics as the theory of the self-sufficient word", that its system had a "rotting foundation".³

One should, however, remember that there was no unified symbolist aesthetic. Mystic motifs, lofty terminology (Vyacheslav Ivanov's "myth" and "hieroglyph",

¹ See Yuri Tynyanov, *Pisatel i ucheny* (Writer and Scholar), Moscow, 1966, p. 54.

² V. Zhirmunsky, *Voprosy teorii literatury. Statyi 1916-1926* (Literary Theory: Essays 1916-1926), Leningrad, 1928, p. 8. It would be apropos to mention the gravitation of certain formalist critics toward acmeism (B. Eichenbaum) and in particular futurism (V. Shklovsky, R. Jakobson and O. Brik).

³ R. Jakobson, "Bryusovskaya stikhologiya i nauka o stikhe" (Bryusov's Versology and Prosodic Studies), *Nauchnye izvestiya* (Scientific Transactions). Collection 2. Philosophy, Literature, Art, Moscow, 1922, pp. 223, 224.

Balmont's "magic" and Sologub's "magism", among others) were coupled with affirmations of the constructiveness and inherent value of words; they also displayed a heightened interest in poetic technique, verse instrumentation, euphony, and so on.

Bely made one of the first attempts in Russian literature to demonstrate the need for exact methods in aesthetics. True, Trediakovsky also made use of statistics, but his experiments were of a timid and random nature. Bely wanted to work out an entire system of methodological principles which were to have been derived from the natural science at the time. Typical in this respect is his essay "Lyrics and Experimentation" (1909), where he speaks with biting irony of the "corrupted" criticism in journals and "official quasi-aesthetics" for which interest in poetic form is idle: "For them (and they are absolutely unfamiliar with scientific experimentation) all ideas on aesthetics as a system of precise experimental sciences are heresy. . . ."¹

Bely tried to put his theories into practice. Such works as *The Russian Iambic Tetrameter*, *A Comparative Morphology of the Rhythm in Russian Lyrics Written in Iambic Dimeter*, and Pushkin's "Sing, lovely one, beg, no more. . .": *A Description* are interspersed with mathematical calculations, formulas, charts, diagrams, and tables. Certain observations which are not without interest alternate with arbitrary generalisations.

This positivist spirit, somewhat pragmatic I would say, that Bely promoted in a shapeless, mystical, anthroposophic casing, this supremacy of "mathematics" over "harmony" above all impressed the members of OPOYAZ. As Victor Shklovsky notes, they immediately realised that in Bely's work "craft has devoured anthroposophy and found it to be very good fertiliser".²

But for Bely craft did not confine itself to anthroposophy; it devoured everything else as well. For Bely the convergence of aesthetics and the exact sciences was directly dependent on the *deideologisation* of art. He saw the subject of truly scientific investigation as being

¹ Andrei Bely, *Simvolizm. Kniga statei* (Symbolism, Essays), Moscow, 1910, p. 237.

² V. Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy* (A Theory of Prose), Moscow, 1929, p. 209.

exclusively confined to artistic form, purified of content. "If we remove the ideas from the poem in question," he writes in his book *Symbolism*, "as outside of the sphere of formal, and therefore exact, observations we are left with form alone, that is, the means of representation, which are the media for the image, the word, their combination and distribution."¹

The author describes everything that does not conform to this basic methodological approach as "flagrantly subjective and unsubstantiated". Bely considered Russian critics of all movements and schools, from the venerable Vengerov and Ovsyaniko-Kulikovsky to the trenchant Ivanov-Razumnik, from the "neurotic" Boborykin to the sociologist Friche, to be suffering from "wilful asceticism", "the fear of falling in love with the very flesh of the artist's expressive thought: words, combinations of words".²

It is surprising how all this—the arguments, logic and even style—resemble the formalist statements about their critical predecessors and the literary scholarship of their day.

Victor Shklovsky, then *enfant terrible* of OPOYAZ, usually expressed their positions in as extreme and paradoxical form as possible. He wrote, "They all lived—the Belinskys, the Dobrolyubovs, the Zaitsevs, the Mikhailovskys, the Skabichevskys, the Ovsyaniko-Kulikovskys, the Kogans and the Lvov-Rogachevskys.

"And they stifled Russian literature.

"They were like the people who came to look at a flower and in order to be more comfortable sat on it."

We note that the author does not differentiate between *narodnik*, sociological, academic or any other sort of literary scholarship; to him they are all the same, all "damned mediocrities, stockholders who've invested in the levelling of society". He was particularly scornful of revolutionary-democratic criticism. It is no accident that Belinsky heads the list; he is mentioned more than once and toward the end is christened the "murderer of Russian literature (unsuccessful)".³

¹ Andrei Bely, *Symbolism*, p. 239.

² Ibid., pp. 598-99.

³ V. Shklovsky, *Sentimentalnoye puteshestviye. Vospominaniya 1918-1923* (Sentimental Journey: Reminiscences 1918-1923), Leningrad, 1924, pp. 75, 76, 131.

Boris Tomashevsky is more restrained, but his judgments can be summarised as follows: Russian criticism of the 1860s dealt with literary characters "from the perspective of their social usefulness and ideology" and removed the hero from works. As Tomashevsky puts it, they "reinterpreted literary works to fit their own ideological measure".¹

Today it seems odd to defend "the Belinskys and Dobrolyubovs" from this sort of accusation. But our accounts of the history of literary scholarship would do well to mention such episodes; the philippics of OPOYAZ are interesting, not in themselves, but as an integral part of a general and demonstrably enduring view of art.

The formalists frequently spoke of themselves as a force which from the very beginning was opposed to symbolism and any manifestation of idealistic, subjective, psychologically-oriented aesthetics. "Our motto," wrote Eichenbaum, "under which the first group of formalists was formed, was the liberation of the poetic word from the fetters of philosophical and religious tendencies that were taking increasing possession of the symbolists."²

In part this is just, but only in part. Formalist criticism was directed against the philosophy of symbolism primarily because it was directed against *any* philosophical conceptions. The symbolists, psychologists and followers of Potebnya were only a target that was close at hand. The primary target of the formalists was thought, content, *anything* socially meaningful in art; and the members of OPOYAZ threw all these things out, together with subjectivism, idealism, the "inner world", and the "spirit". The surprising kinship between the formalists and Bely proves to be a little less surprising on second thought; the symbolist "fire" and the formalist "water" coincided on one extraordinarily important principle—in their negation of content as something that purportedly was wholly relegated to the realm of subjectivism.

The "objectivity" for which the formalists fought was obtained dearly, as one scholar of the thirties notes,—at

¹ B. Tomashevsky, *Teoriya literatury. Poetika* (The Theory of Literature: Poetics), Moscow-Leningrad, 1930, p. 154.

² B. Eichenbaum, *Literatura. Teoriya, kritika, polemika* (Literature: Theory, Criticism, Polemics), Leningrad, 1927, p. 120.

the cost of meaning.¹ The formalists paid the price without hesitation.

And strictly speaking, was it really objectivity? In fact we face a pseudonym for something else: the theory of the *immanence* of art, the total *autonomy* of the aesthetic series.

In this respect the members of OPOYAZ had predecessors and concurrents apart from Bely. I will not undertake a detailed analysis of the sources of Russian formalism (since I am not writing a history of OPOYAZ or a book on the development of the Russian "formal school", and I hasten to state this so as to avoid possible reproaches for the sketchiness of the treatment, and so on). But I do want to make a few comments.

At the same time as Bely's experiments and the first efforts of OPOYAZ, a series of works appeared where numbers served as the main tool for the investigation of the laws of creativity. More often and with greater persistence critics claimed that "statistics is one way to clarify the elements of the word".²

N. Setnitsky's brochure *Statistics, Literature and Poetry* backs up its theses with an extensive list of literature. True, it also includes utterly traditional works such as Y. Denisov's textbook *Ancient Greek and Roman Metrics* (Moscow, 1888) or F. E. Korsh's book *The Question of the Authenticity of the Ending to Pushkin's "Mermaid" in D. P. Zuyev's Copy* (2 volumes, St. Petersburg, 1898-1899) — a work more textological than statistical. Other works mentioned by Setnitsky are indeed largely based on quantitative analysis.

S. Lukyanov, for example, scrupulously counts the number of syllables, vowels and consonants in A. Golenishchev Kutuzov's poem "The Angel of Death" in a work written for the *Journal of the Ministry of Education*. In S. Bobrov's book *Notes of a Versifier* (Moscow, 1916) we find an extensive table of the relations between labial, dental, sibilant and other consonants in the works of Pushkin (three poems), Lermontov (one poem) and Bob-

¹ See P. Medvedev, *Formalizm i formalisty* (Formalism and Formalists), Leningrad, 1934, p. 136.

² N. Setnitsky, *Statistika, literatura i poeziya. K voprosu o plane issledovaniya* (Statistics, Literature and Poetry: A Theoretical Plan) Odessa, 1922, p. 18.

rov himself (four poems). The journal *Apollon* published a series of essays by V. Chudovsky based on various statistical calculations, among them "On the Rhythms of Pushkin's *Mermaid*" (1914, Nos. 1-2); "Some Thoughts on Prosodic Teachings", (1915, Nos. 8-9); and "Allegations Regarding Russian Verse" (1917, Nos. 4-5). G. Shengeli's books *Two Literary Monuments* (Petrograd, 1918) and *Treatise on Russian Verse* (Odessa, 1921) came out with only a brief interval between them; their pages were filled with all sorts of tables, percentages, coefficients and the like.

This fascination with quantitative analysis was not, in general, based on firm methodological foundations. One cannot help smiling when Lukyanov, having calculated the percentage of monosyllabic words in the poetry of Pushkin and that of Golenishchev-Kutuzov, concludes that the latter "uses these elements with almost the same mastery as Pushkin".¹ Among other parodies of judgment we find the following: "We have four symmetrically intersecting semicircles, and among them two semicircles intersect twice and three semicircles two times. There is one instance of the non-symmetrical intersection of concentric semicircles. There are seven chains. Among them are three chains in one link and four chains out of three links." The preceding quote is not from a textbook on geometry but D. Balika's book *The Poet's Laboratory: F. Sologub, A. Bely, E. Zamyatin* (1917).²

There have, however, been attempts to find some sort of principles in the application of statistical methods. Telling are the materials published in the Academy of Science's editions.

N. Morozov calls his work *Linguistic Spectra*. He counts the link-words per thousand words in the works of Russian classical writers and establishes, for example, that the negative particle *ne* (not) occurs slightly less than twenty times per thousand words in the works of Tolstoy; "twenty times in Pushkin and Gogol, while in Turgenev it may

¹ S. M. Lukyanov, "'Angel smerti' gr. A. A. Golenishcheva-Kutuzova" (A. A. Golenishchev-Kutuzov's "The Angel of Death"), *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniya*. New Series, Part XLIX, February 1914, p. 329.

² Quoted from the almanac *Literaturnaya mysl* (Literary Thought), 1, Petrograd, 1922, p. 163.

occur more than thirty times—a significantly greater number". The preposition *v* (into, in) "occurs in Gogol's *Taras Bulba* twenty-three times per thousand words; in 'A May Night' fifteen; in 'A Terrible Vengeance' 16 times" while in the works of Pushkin "*v* occurs far more frequently per thousand words than such prepositions as *na* (on, at) and *s* (with, from)".¹

In conducting what he calls "stylometric" experiments, Morozov, to judge by the subtitle of his work, appears to set himself a fairly limited task—measuring the distinction between plagiarism and genuine works of art. But we can readily observe that in fact he is speaking of something far more essential: the search for precise, statistically-based methods of investigating artistic style. It is precisely in this sense that Morozov proposes a means of calculating the "coefficient of the author's individuality".

A. Markov applied statistical methods even earlier than Morozov. In his comments to the latter's work, and he is basically favourably inclined, he stresses the necessity of working out firm methodological foundations and genuine scientific principles which would guarantee "consistent conclusions" and "stability" in such studies.²

The stylometric movement in poetics did not directly converge with the experiments of OPOYAZ, but it represents an important factor for understanding the general atmosphere of the times when such conceptions as the de-ideologisation of literature and the notion of an artistic work as a sum of technical devices totally confined to itself were being shaped.

The spirit and development of German *Gestalt* theory, which was most productive in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were particularly close to OPOYAZ.

¹ N. Morozov, "Lingvisticheskiye spektry. Sredstvo dlia otlichiiya plagiatov ot istinnykh proizvedenii togo ili drugogo avtora" (Linguistic Spectra: Means for Distinguishing Plagiarisms from Genuine Works of Art), *Izvestiya otdeleniya russkogo yazyka i slovesnosti Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk* (Proceedings of the Department of Russian Language and Literature), Vol. 20, Book 4, 1915, pp. 101, 105.

² A. A. Markov, "Ob odnom primenenii statisticheskogo metoda" (One Application of Statistical Methods), *Izvestiya Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk* (Proceedings of the Royal Academy of Sciences), Series VI, No. 4, 1916, p. 239.

K. Fiedler and A. Hildebrand tried to make the "architectonic structure of a work of art" the main object of investigation. In the preface to the third edition of his book *Problems of Form in the Fine Arts* Hildebrand wrote, "Architectonic form is that which makes a higher work of art from the artistic study of nature."¹ These principles were inherited by Heinrich Wölfflin, particularly in his idea of "an art without names". I should also mention the writer Oskar Walzel whose works, according to one contemporary German author, helped to "pioneer" immanent criticism.² Walzel felt that "the scientific observation of poetry" should be bound to "forget about the creator for the sake of the creation". In providing a base for his theory he affirmed that in many cases a work of art is perceived primarily in view of "the striving towards a purely formal artistic satisfaction". "Many leave the theatre unsatisfied, certain that the tragedy was ethically incomplete, while in fact they have merely been deprived of the formal action of the denouement to which they have grown accustomed."³

As a rule, the members of OPOYAZ did not mention such predecessors, sometimes out of ignorance, sometimes for other reasons. This, by the way, gave the Russian "formal school" the air of being home-made. A Beletsky ironically comments on this effort "to be recognised as pioneers in provinces that had never been investigated, to create their own systems, never suspecting, or never wishing to suspect that there were other, often quite sound systems, in their desire to say new things, although in fact they have been said—and with authority—long ago by others".⁴ Exceptions included V. Zhirmunsky, author of the preface to the Russian edition of Walzel's book, and B. Eichenbaum, who noted that Russian formalism in rela-

¹ Adolph Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst*, Strassburg, 1913, S. VIII.

² V. Setschkareff, "Einige neuere Werke zur allgemein Literaturwissenschaft", *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*, Bd. XXIII, Heft 2, Heidelberg, 1955, S. 356.

³ Oskar Walzel, *Die künstlerische Form des Dichtwerks*, Berlin, 1919, S. 37, 14, 10.

⁴ A. Beletsky, "Neskolko slov o razrabotke nauchnoy poetiki v Rossii i na Zapade" (A Word on the Development of Scientific Poetics in Russia and the West), in R. Müller-Freinfels, *Poetika* (Poetics), Kharkov, 1923, pp. 5-6.

tion to Western European formalism sounded like *Freischütz* played by timid beginners.

One should note that in the works of some representatives of Russian "academic eclecticism", who were so slighted by the members of OPOYAZ, ideas turn up that are not all that alien to the movement. V. Peretz, for example, wrote that in his view literary studies should deal with "*literature itself*, not biography, history or the psychology of a certain author's creative work" and that the literary historian "studies the formal aspect of verbal art", ignoring "the study of content, ideas".¹

The Russian "formal school" carried these principles to an extreme and cast them in pointed, deliberately paradoxical, at times shocking, formulas. They emphasised the self-sufficient word, liberated from the "fetters" of meaning. The primary and sole hero of literary research, as I noted earlier, was the device. A work of literature was examined as a self-contained phenomenon, a pointless game, "something made, formed, invented—not only artful, but artificial".²

Here are only a few characteristic theses:

"Let others hamstring a poet with the ideas expressed in his works! It is absurd to incriminate a poet in harbouring ideas or feelings."³

"It-[art-Y.B.] has no *causal* connections with 'life', 'temperament' or 'psychology'."⁴

"The history of poetry is the history of the development of verbally formulated devices."⁵

"We were accused of evading the judgment of what literature is and of failing to illuminate literature through some philosophy.

"I will answer by means of analogy. One can be ignorant of electricity and study its nature. What do we mean by asking, 'What is electricity?' I would say, 'If you screw

¹ V. N. Peretz, *Kratki ocherk metodologii istorii russkoy literatury* (A Brief Discussion of Methodology in the History of Russian Literature), Petrograd, 1922, p. 19.

² B. Eichenbaum, *Skvoz literaturu* (Through Literature), Leningrad, 1924, p. 189.

³ R. Jakobson, *Modern Russian Poetry*, p. 16.

⁴ B. Eichenbaum, "Nekrasov", (1922), in *O poezii* (On Poetry), Leningrad, 1969, p. 55.

⁵ O. M. Brik, "T.n. 'formalny metod'" (The So-Called Formal Method), *Lef*, No. 1, 1923, p. 214.

in an electric bulb it will light up. . . .’ These are the sort of investigations of literature conducted by the formalists.”¹

“To draw an analogy from the sphere of manufacturing, I am interested, not in the state of the world cotton market, not in the policies of trusts, but in sorts of yarn and ways of weaving them.”

The author of the following aphorism, as often was the case, went beyond all others; he reduced not only the characters and their fates, the literary type and epoch, but even the author’s world outlook to his technique: “Social prescription and outlook are useful to an artist as a reason for changing form. . . .”²

These quotations have long ago passed into the annals of literature; I do not cite them to give one more antedated reprimand to their authors. Some of them have changed a great deal in their outlook. Victor Shklovsky’s book *Bowstring*, an informative literary and human document, bears witness to this; it is a sort of reckoning with the past.

There is a good deal of disputable material here, particularly with regard to OPOYAZ. In travelling along old paths and turning over the pages of the past the author cannot force himself to be totally objective. The errors of distant years, his own and those of his friends, at times are seen through the fog of pleasant, treasured memories in a romantic light.

But I want to stress another point here. *Bowstring* gives up, or rather writes an obituary for a series of OPOYAZ postulates. It is sufficient to compare the above quotations with the statement that art “changes its means of expression, not for formal changes, but to find a perceptible, precise expression of new realities”.³ This already shows the profundity of the change. Today Shklovsky calls his earlier views of literary works as pure form “capitulatory”, for he realises that “when we reject emotion or ideology in art we also preclude the comprehension of

¹ B. V. Tomashevsky, “Formalny metod. (Vmesto nekrologa)” (The Formal Method: In Lieu of Obituary), in *Sovremennaya literatura. Sbornik statey* (Contemporary Literature: Essays), Leningrad, 1925, p. 148.

² V. Shklovsky, *On a Theory of Prose*, pp. 5-6, 216.

³ V. Shklovsky, *Tetiva. O neskhoodstve skhodnogo* (*Bowstring: Differences in Likeness*), Moscow, 1970, p. 345.

form, the goal of comprehension and the apprehension of the world through emotional experiences".¹

Well, is that the end of the history of formalism? Alas, no. If this were the case we would have no call to object to things past. But life shows the contrary to be true.

"The essence of literature is not in what it conveys, but in the system itself. . . ."²

Don't you find it difficult to refrain from feeling that here is another OPOYAZ paradox? In fact this quotation has nothing to do with OPOYAZ. These words belong to Roland Barthes, a distinguished representative of structuralist criticism. Here is a clear "exchange" with the formalist school; or perhaps it would be more accurately called methodological continuity. Critic Rita Schober (GDR) analyses the methodological principles of French New Criticism and notes that the idea of the relative insignificance of historical context for the comprehension and interpretation of literature, the idea that is the basis of the "extracontextual works" of Barthes and Blanchot was "propounded earlier by Shklovsky".³ And indeed a basic tenet of formalism is the immanence of art; it was advanced to an extreme by OPOYAZ theoreticians and did not sink into the Lethe with this circle. Today it is taking on a second wind, having been borne through the decades like a baton, first by the Prague Linguistic Circle, then by various schools of New Criticism, and finally has been taken up by the structuralist literary critics.

In his essay "On Structuralist Literary Criticism",⁴ P. Palievsky rightly notes that attempts to construct a finished, well-made system of formalist poetics were made by American New Critics, including R. P. Warren, J. C. Ransom, C. Brooks, and W. Empson. One can hardly help sharing Palievsky's views on New Criticism, but I fear that he is indulging in wishful thinking when he claims that the system "collapsed because of scholasticism and inapplicability". It's a bit early to bury the New Crit-

¹ Ibid., p. 12.

² Quoted from *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 11, 1968, p. 173.

³ Rita Schober, *Von der wirklichen Welt in der Dichtung*, Berlin und Weimar, 1970, S. 56; see also "Im Banne der Sprache" *Strukturalismus in der Nouvelle Critique, spezielle bei Roland Barthes*, Saale, 1968.

⁴ See *Znamya*, No. 12, 1963.

icism. To this day it is an extremely influential wing of bourgeois literary criticism; no matter how strong our epithets may be they can hardly change the state of affairs. In any case I find R. Weimann closer to reality in his book on the New Critics where, on the basis of extensive materials, he shows how strong the New Criticism is today, how deep the roots of formalism.

The fact that the New Criticism is a multifarious phenomenon is another matter; within this movement there are numerous trends and even differences. Some of its representatives attempt to surmount the narrow boundaries of the movement by introducing elements of Freudism or existentialism.

But despite some individual departures from the norm, the main tenet of the New Criticism remains unshakable: a work of art is viewed as a frozen phenomenon, excluding, more or less consistently and more or less militantly, any connections between art and reality. In the end all the schools of New Criticism stand united on this platform. J. C. Ransom expresses the essence of it: he suggests that "any poetry which is 'technically' notable is in part a work of abstractionist art, concentrating upon the structure and the texture, and the structure-texture relation, out of a pure speculative interest".¹

Structuralist literary criticism also focuses on "structure-texture relation"; its closeness to Russian formalism and the New Criticism can be most clearly seen in its efforts to free the work of literature of everything that goes beyond the limits of the closed system.

Closely connected to information theory and structural linguistics, structural criticism borrowed the first field's attitude toward a work as a system of transmitting messages irregardless of their contents, and the emphasis on syntax, rather than semantics, of the structural linguistics. "The purpose of structural criticism," writes Mikel Dufrenne in his essay "Structure et sens" (*Revue d'Esthétique*, No. 1, 1967), "is to single out elements and the structures which connect them; these elements are the *signifiants*, but they have the ability to be inserted into the system without having direct connections to the sig-

¹ See Robert Weimann, "New Criticism" und die Entwicklung bürgerlicher Literaturwissenschaft, Saale, 1962, S. 133.

nifés; in themselves these elements are non-meaningful; structuralism's task is to engender meaning from non meaning through structure." This sense born of nonsense is not the "meaning of something" or "meaning for something"—it is immanent; it neither enters into a social or historical context nor requires any correspondence to reality.

Even the proposition that literary scholarship can examine a work of art as information about the real world and as a means of influencing that world is rejected by structuralist critics as a "realistic illusion". For such critics a work of literature is like an algebraic equation whose meaning is exclusively dependent on the correlation of the elements and confined to it. In the words of M. Dufrenne, "Criticism cuts the umbilical cord which ties the work to its author and through the author to the world." It is transformed into a "metalanguage" which, as Barthes claims (Dufrenne refers to him in his essay), "gives a true criticism of meaning through attending to the organisation of *signifiants* rather than by revealing the *signifié* and its connection to the *signifiant*".

Italian critic Barbieri Scuarotti's essays "Criticism as Structure" (*Sigma*, No. 10, 1966) and "Between Sociology and Linguistics" (*Giovane Critica*, No. 12, 1966) support and defend this approach to literature.

The act of criticism, says B. Scuarotti, is always "strictly synchronic", and consists exclusively in the investigation of technical devices, the inner structure of a work of art, with the goal of determining the specifics of this structure. The specific character of an object requires specific techniques of investigation. "Attempts to discover the specifics of a work," writes the author, "by means of devices intended for other types of work or other areas of investigation and the dissolution of critical research into questions inherent to such peripheral spheres of knowledge prevents the critic from comprehending the work. It is the same as if someone were to try to conduct experiments in chemistry using the methods of historiography or to study economics with the help of physical hypotheses."

One could support the author's defence of the specificity of art were it not for his reference to "peripheral" factors which may prevent a critical investigation from acquiring "pure value". Scuarotti lumps them under "historicism",

meaning all those things which "subordinate art [and naturally the criticism of art—Y.B.] to the laws of history and society". It turns out that the critic includes idealistic philosophy, the dictates of bourgeois taste, the "patterns of Lukács", Marxist aesthetics and socialist realism in this category. He believes that only by rejecting all this and using ideologically neutral scientific vocabulary and making the strict use of this vocabulary a criterion can the critic perform his main task—"to describe literature entirely outside of economic and social structures".

If we proceed from *this* task, we cannot help but note that the author is logical; it can only be performed by breaking with the "laws of history and society". But does not such criticism, with its tenet of "a literary work's orientation on itself", risk sharing the position of Mann's Adrian Leverkühn playing "with forms that, as we know, have lost all life"?¹

True, these are, so to speak, extreme statements. There are more moderate tendencies in structuralism. Yuri Lotman, for example, one of the most serious representatives of our structuralist school, insists that the structural approach to art in no way implies a deliberate underevaluation of content, let alone its rejection. "The concepts 'ideas' and 'the poetic notion of reality' are not," he writes, "replaced by some abstract structural 'x'. We must study *the structure of an idea, the structure of the poetic notion of reality. . .*" On this basis Lotman firmly rejects any direct connection, continuity, even correlation between structuralism and formalism. This connection, as he sees it, "is presently (by various critics for various reasons) artificially hypertrophied. . .".²

Lotman devotes particular attention to this problem in *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, offering his own interpretation to the still burning disputes between the formalists and their opponents.

By way of historical-literary analogy, he turns to Fonvizin's play *The Dunces*. Referring to Mitrofan's reasoning,

¹ Thomas Mann, *Doktor Faustus*, Berlin, 1971, S. 329.

² Y. M. Lotman, "Lektsii po strukturalnoy poetike" (Lectures on Structural Poetics), *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, I. Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta (Works in Semiotics, I. Transactions of Tartu State University), issue 160, 1964, pp. 10, 13.

known to us all from our childhood, to the effect that a door is an adjective "because it's attached to its place",¹ the author of *The Structure of the Artistic Text* is inclined to see here something more than stupidity and ignorance. In his opinion the overgrown booby is the incarnation of "common sense which does not acknowledge abstractions and prefers to solve problems from the point of view of essence rather than method".² Mitrofan's mommy, Prostakova, also views things in a similar fashion. The teacher Tsyfirkin's posing of a problem—the equal division of a sum of three hundred rubles which someone has found—becomes a pretext for advice. "If you found the money, don't share it with anyone. Take it all for yourself, Mitrofanushka. Don't pay any heed to that stupid book-learning." Here again, as Lotman points out, she is quite right from the viewpoint of "common sense" because for her and her kind the essence of the problem is more important than arithmetic.

Who are retired sergeant Tsyfirkin and his colleague, deacon Kuteikin? It seems that they are the precursors of contemporary structuralism for in vainly attempting to drum the rules of arithmetic and grammar into the thick head of the minor they affirm the nature of these disciplines as "immanent structures of knowledge". They are opposed by Mitrofan and Prostakova, for whom these systems are nothing but "stupid book-learning"; they have no capacity for abstract thinking and clearly prefer content to form.

I would call this a preventive attack tactic. Lotman appears to be anticipating potential critics and trying to neutralise and disarm them in advance. This is the purpose of his references to *The Dunces*. The author must establish the legitimacy of the study of art as a synchronically closed structure and prove that immanent textual analysis is not a concession to formalism and does not entail a departure from questions concerning the content, meaning, and socio-ethical value of art and its ties with reality. Anticipating that such an approach might give

¹ Mitrofan is punning on the Russian word for adjective (*prilagatelnoe*) which is derived from the verb *prilozhit* ("to attach")—Tr.

² Y. M. Lotman, *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta* (The Structure of the Artistic Text), Moscow, 1970, p. 46.

rise to doubts, the scholar wants to immediately disavow them by pointing to Mitrofan and Prostakova, as if to say, "Look who your confederates are, my distinguished opponent. . . ."

What can one say here? He wishes to disown formalism, which is understandable; but wishing is not enough. There are facts and the remorseless, objectively existing logic of a conception.

Naturally it is quite reasonable to say that Tsyfirkin is teaching Mitrofan "not how to behave on the basis of moral considerations or to one's own advantage, but how to divide whole numbers" and that if one is to master arithmetic and grammar "they must, at a certain stage, be seen as immanent closed systems of knowledge".¹ But to what degree can this principle be extrapolated to apply to creativity? In investigating a work of art can we confine ourselves "to the correctness of the implemented operations", disregarding everything that Lotman for some reason ironically calls "the essence" of phenomena?

Apparently the author is inclined to give a positive answer to these questions although the example he gives from Fonvizin's comedy speaks to the contrary. We are not speaking of the conflict between common sense and abstract thought, between "the point of view of essence" and that of "methods". Prostakova's reasoning is a clear illustration of the fact that even the rules of arithmetic, when they are included in the sphere of human relations, the sphere of art, may be interpreted from anything but an immanent position; they suddenly acquire moral and social meaning.

True, Lotman stresses that for him the immanent approach to an artistic text is to a considerable degree conditional and heuristic, only a preliminary stage in the path toward the comprehension of content. He reasons that in order to understand a book's content, one must know the language in which it is written; in a language textbook we are interested not in ideas or content but in the forms and rules of the language as a system capable of transmitting messages. This is all true of natural language. But what of art? Art, as Lotman puts it, is a secondary modeling system, superimposed on natural language; it has *its own*

¹ Y. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, p. 46.

language. Can we make this division, even hypothetically, between the planes of content and expression? In any case the division will be hypothetical to such an extent that the closedness of a text can no longer be spoken of as a real feature.

Here one senses a duality, an inconsistency in Lotman's position. Since we are dealing with a question of principle, we will examine this in more detail.

On the one hand the scholar suggests (and attempts) the examination of the text outside of its context as an isolated whole, *an und für sich*. On the other hand he is obliged to deal with factors which violate this closedness, "tunneling in" from without. On the one hand he insists, and insists quite firmly, on the principle of immanence. On the other hand he sets the "structure of the idea", the "structure of the transmitted content", in opposition to the abstract structure.

Let us examine the facts. In one of his earlier works Lotman writes that "the study of culture, art and literature as a sign system loses all meaning when isolated from the problem of content".¹ In a later book, he writes: "To a person who would prefer to deal with a text isolated from the totality of its extratextual bonds, a work cannot convey any meaning at all."² Furthermore he suggests that a literary work "is not exhausted by the text", that it is a relation of "textual and extratextual systems".³ Finally, in examining means for the formation of new meanings in the process of so-called recoding—the convergence, intersection, interaction of elements from various structures—Lotman notes in passing that repeated recoding creates a "semantic kernel which is perceived as meaning, going beyond the limits of semiotic structures into the world of the object".⁴

In other words he confesses that such concepts as meaning, content, and sense cannot be contained within

¹ Y. Lotman, "O probleme znacheniya vo vtorichnykh modeliruyushchikh sistemakh" (On the Problem of Meaning in Secondary Modeling Systems), *Trudy po znakovym sistemam. II. Uchenye zapiski Tartusskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, issue 181, 1965, p. 22.

² Y. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, p. 65.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

the boundaries of closed structures. What then remains of immanence?

Lotman attempts to resolve this contradiction by introducing the compromise concept of "immanent meaning". By way of example he quotes Rousseau, assuming that we can determine the meaning of his ideas not only by comparing them with the ideas of other structural series, but by clarifying the relation of a given element to other elements of that same system (for example, the relation of Rousseau's concept of "the people" to the ideas of "man", "reason", "morality" and "power" as professed by that author). Such investigations are possible, but what makes the knowledge acquired in this way immanent? Lotman himself confesses that "we cannot isolate ourselves. . . from the numerous meanings of these terms which are extrasystemic from the perspective of Rousseau's philosophy",¹ and this is quite true.

Lotman's interpretation of the modeling nature of art is marked by the same duality.

"...A work of art is the model of an infinite world,"² he writes. These words would seem to leave no doubt that art models nothing other than objective reality. It would seem that such a view would not be commensurate with the notion of a model as something closed, a mechanism cut off from reality, functioning only according to its immanent laws. In fact some of Lotman's judgments can be interpreted in just this spirit.

Here is one example. The book tells how German mathematician Felix Klein managed to model Lobachevsky's proposition that two straight lines parallel to a third could be drawn through one point. It was impossible to prove this using traditional "common" devices—it involved the violation of traditionally accepted notions which Kant, for example, found to be true *a priori*. What did Klein do? He proposed to draw a circle on an ordinary Euclidian plane; the lines formed chords and the parallel lines—chords with a common end. It is important to note that he considered only the inner part of the circle and excluded the circumference and area beyond it. In the

¹ Y. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, p. 54.

² *Ibid.*, p. 256.

limits of this fixed space, which functioned as a model of all space, Lobachevsky's proposition was clearly proved.

Lotman believes that this example has "a direct relation to the problem of the frame in art".¹ The beginning and end lift the text out of its context (be it literary, historical or social), cutting it off from everything beyond the frame. This, according to him, is the modeling function of art.

Thus the means for constructing a geometric model are extrapolated to apply to art. I confess that this seems to entail certain risks. Let me cite the well-known Marxist philosopher Georg Klaus. He believes that the mathematical concept of a model is "precisely the opposite of the way it is usually applied in the remaining sciences".² Without discussing the fine points I will note only that we are speaking of a fundamental, qualitative difference in the relation between concrete interpretation and abstraction, of the differences in the application of the method of analogy in different spheres. With regard to art the gap between the modeled structures and emotional spontaneity is particularly dangerous; we risk coming out with, not a model of the objective world, but an anaemic scheme. What is permissible and productive in mathematics may be fatal to art.

I don't want my remarks to be interpreted as scepticism about the idea of modeling. The idea of the modeling function of a work of art is widely applied today in Marxist aesthetics though the controversy continues. It is clear, however, that it is not enough to merely state this; a good deal has yet to be done in order to clarify the concept of a model with respect to its aesthetic features. As H. Redeker (GDR) notes in his book *Reflection and Action*, "There are no limits to the abstraction possible in the concept of the model as such [as R. Garaudy, for example, treats it—Y. B.] and so one can call any mathematical symbolisation of the model 'literature';" on the other hand one can "designate any work of bourgeois abstract art as a model. . .".³

¹ Ibid., p. 258.

² Georg Klaus, *Kybernetik in philosophischer Sicht*, Berlin, 1961, S. 245.

³ Horst Redeker, *Abbildung und Aktion*, Berlin, 1966, S. 39.

Redeker's book is interesting in particular because it attempts to understand the model in art from the perspective of the dialectics of reflection and creative activity. Our German colleague gives a fundamental criterion in describing the modeling function of art: verisimilitude. "Is the general structure of the work an adequate model of the essential features of the historical process?" This entails that the model "be correlated with the original" and at the same time demands "that it be regarded in the same way as the original".¹

This important element—the reflection of life, the cognition of reality—is precisely what is lost in Lotman's conclusions on the modeling function of art. As M. Khrapchenko rightly observes, this results in the fact that "Lotman's artistic model does not function as a system revealing the structure of the world, but as a totality of subjective notions about it, or, in other words, the projection of the categories of 'pure' consciousness".² Therefore Lotman's attention is focused on areas where the model *does not correspond* to reality. He stresses that modeling is not the copying of an object in its characteristic forms, but "*always a translation*".³ But in the first place copying and reflection of an object "in its characteristic forms" are very different things. In the second place—and this is the main thing—when the question is posed in this way *one side* of the process is deliberately stressed to the detriment of its dialectic. As a result our attention is focused, not on the artistic-cognitive role of the model, but on its role as a mythologiser in art. An alternative to uninspired verisimilitude is "twentieth century painting", which, according to Lotman, permits itself "combinations forbidden by daily consciousness".⁴ It is not difficult to guess the polemic function of this claim; we recall the image of Prostakova as the embodiment of "common sense". . . .

The latter motif is prominent in Lotman's system of argumentation and we should discuss it in a bit more detail.

¹ Horst Redeker, op. cit., S. 21, 23.

² M. Khrapchenko, "Semiotika i khudozhestvennoye tvorchestvo. Statya pervaya" (Semiotics and Art: First Article), *Voprosy literatury*, No. 9, 1971, p. 78.

³ Y. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, p. 256.

⁴ Ibid., p. 342.

The relations between "common sense" and "daily" consciousness on the one hand, and art on the other hand, are seen by Lotman as "one of the most crucial questions of twentieth century culture", going beyond the sphere of aesthetics and acquiring a clear social import. In his opinion daily consciousness is "the only ideological form comprehensible to philistines, whose anti-cultural function has been exposed in the twentieth century with particular force". From this viewpoint those currents in modern art which are oriented toward "combinations forbidden by daily consciousness" are the main force of "the avant-garde in the struggle with philistinism."

But can the problem be posed in this one-sided way?

Naturally Lotman is right to oppose the straightforward notion that the art coincides with reality, the mechanical application to art of "norms and conceptions which take shape in a man through his daily actions and through the direct impressions of his emotional perceptions".¹ This is a truly important aspect of the development of contemporary culture which does much to explain, for example, the dissemination of bourgeois "mass culture" and its mechanisms of influence.

But here too one finds numerous indications that for malist art is also active in performing an obscurantist mission for all its avant-garde pretensions. The philistine is impressed, not only by Hollywood's hits, cheap television shows and the novels of Ian Fleming, but by such refined forms of literary avant-gardism as surrealism, pop- and op-art.

The treatment of avant-garde art as something anti-philistine and genuinely revolutionary (which is hardly a novelty) cannot be confirmed by ideological and artistic practice irregardless of the subjective motives of its representatives (and among them there are many who sincerely want to express their pain and non-acceptance of the ugly side of bourgeois civilisation). The substitution of verisimilitude for the truth and the affirmation of nar-

¹ Y. Lotman, "Strikhotvoreniya rannego Pasternaka i nekotorye voprosy strukturnogo izucheniya teksta" (Pasternak's Early Poetry and Some Aspects of the Structural Study of the Text), *Trudy po znakovym sistemam. IV. Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, issue 236, 1969, pp. 222-23.

rowly pedestrian criteria is only one form of expression of attempts made by philistines to monopolise the sphere of the human spirit, in particular, the sphere of art. No less typical for today's Prostakova is commercial interest in the most radical departures from "common sense", in anti-art which destroys the harmony of her daily consciousness, delightfully shocking and exciting it and, in addition, bringing more than modest profits.

The complexities of this problem remain outside the field of vision of the author of *The Structure of the Artistic Text* and this, it seems to me, is to a significant degree the result of a one-sided, essentially immanent interpretation of the category of the model in its application to art. Lotman's proposed model is not connected to the theory of reflection, verisimilitude or realism. There is no place for these principles in the system of structural poetics; they are not included in "that closed, closed, closed world".

There is also no place for such "traditional" concepts as the artist's position, his views on life and philosophy. This illustrates the fact that the structural and mathematical-statistical schools ignore the creative individual in art; the role of the writer is reduced to "the business of choosing and varying the way in which the work is to be constructed".¹

In Lotman's theory all that is related to the artist's personality is replaced by the so-called "point of view". This category is borrowed from the critical arsenal of the New Criticism, in particular American New Critics P. Lubbock, M. Shorer, A. Tate and N. Friedman, although strangely enough Lotman forgets to mention them, as does B. Uspensky, author of *The Poetics of Composition*, which is almost entirely built around the application of this device. If one takes the most significant works of the proponents of the "point of view" approach one can find many valuable concrete observations on the formal features of the novel. However the New Criticism is not capable of establishing the dialectical connection of "point of view" with other formal elements, revealing their general relation to historical reality.

¹ M. B. Khrapchenko, *The Writer's Creative Individuality and the Development of Literature*, Moscow, 1977, p. 60.

As for structural poetics, it connects "point of view" primarily with exclusively inner rules of the text, with the notion of its closedness. It is no accident that Lotman calls this chapter of his book "The Point of View of the Text". Duality is duality, but immanence triumphs all the same as a fundamental principle that defines the theory. No matter how Lotman strives to break through the vicious circle he is nevertheless obliged to choose between formal "rules" and "essence" (we should bear in mind that we did not invent this dilemma; it was expressed by the scholar himself in the course of his polemic with Madame Prostakova) and he chooses the first.

By the way, the history of structuralist schools has already witnessed similar attempts.

Distinguished Czechoslovak literary scholar Jan Mukařovský, an acknowledged authority in semiotic studies of art, wrote in the preface to *Aesthetic Function, Norms and Values as Social Factors* that while his initial methods were closest to Russian formalism in their assertion of art's autonomy, he later concluded that one should study art in relation to other series.

This would seem to be a break with formalism, a surmounting of its narrowness—isn't an approach to a work of art as not only a sign and structure, but a value, already a step forward in comparison to orthodox formalism?

It is a step in the right direction. But we should not be in a hurry to assume that here structuralism has arrived at a Marxist understanding of the social connections of an artistic structure. In fact Mukařovský, despite his attention to these relations, has not rejected the main principle of immanence in the understanding of a work of art; and that principle cannot be reconciled with the Marxist interpretation. It is purely in the formalist tradition. Mukařovský feels the contradictions inherent in his position, but he believes that the semiotic approach can remove them. This is an illusion. No one yet has succeeded in reconciling the irreconcilable.

The attempts to find a structural key to the contents of art are hardly likely to become more productive. In any case it is still not clear what actually is behind Lot-

man's term "the structure of the transmitted content".¹ The subjective intentions of this or that scholar are not the issue here. The principle of the closed immanence of the aesthetic series, its isolation from the world, man and meaning is not merely an error on the part of individual writers, but is organic to the nature of structuralism and inherited from formalism. There's no getting around it.

The basis of structuralism is the premise that there is an unconscious, hidden, abstract structure, whose determining factors are abstract relations between the elements, the elements themselves which reflect some aspect of reality are not significant; this premise destroys the dialectic between "relations" and "essence". The actual content reflected by each of these elements is not taken into account at all. In the opinion of one structuralist, a literary work is only a sort of system of symbols where "each substitutes its own content",² and in this regard art is, in principle, no different than fortune telling or a religious sermon.

One could say, of course, that this is an extreme view. It is true that Lotman speaks not simply about elements, but about "*significant* elements", and the "*semantic load*" carried by each. But it still turns out that the real world and our model of that world are above all "a system of relations and connections",³ this for him is the essence of the structural approach.

The idea that the system of signifiers is more important than that which is signified, that pure relations are above essence and the meaning of relating elements is the heritage of Ferdinand de Saussure. The formal school served as an intermediary link between Saussure and the structuralists.

¹ See Y. Lotman, "O razgranichenii lingvisticheskogo i literaturovedcheskogo ponyatiya struktury" (On the Delimitation of the Linguistic and Literary Concepts of Structure), *Voprosy yazykoznaniiya*, No. 3, 1963.

² *Simpozium po strukturnomu izucheniyu znakovykh sistem. Tezisy dokladov* (Symposium on the Structural Study of Sign Systems. Reports), Moscow, 1962, p. 125.

³ Y. Lotman, "Literaturovedeniye dolzhno byt naukoy" (Literary Scholarship Should Be Scientific), *Voprosy literatury*, No. 1, 1967, pp. 96, 92.

"Poetic speech," we read in one of G. Vinokur's essays on Saussure, "is constructed by means of the juxtaposition and conflict of independent elements of the language as such. . . ."¹ Victor Shklovsky was still more categorical. A work of literature, he insisted, "is a pure form, not a thing, not material, but the relation of materials". The meaning of these interrelating elements ("numerator and denominator") is not significant. "Comic, tragic, universal or chamber works, the contrast of one world to another, or of a cat to a stone are equivalent."² This leads to the comparison of literature to chess: "The action in a work of literature takes place on a given field; types and masks of the employ of contemporary theatre will correspond to chess pieces. The plots correspond to gambits, classical openings which players use and vary. Tasks and peripeteia correspond to the opponent's moves."³ Here Shklovsky uses the same comparison with regard to literature as Saussure. In order to clarify his concept of language as a system, where relations are more important than essence, Saussure points to chess. "If I replace wooden pieces with pieces made of ivory this does not affect the system; but if I decrease or increase the number of pieces this will have a profound effect of the 'grammar' of the game."⁴ Shklovsky needs the analogy to chess to prove that literature can also be entirely reduced to "relations", to the "weaving of sounds, articulatory movements and thoughts",⁵ that the soul of a literary work is "its composition, its form". "Or," he writes, "using my formula, 'the content (or soul) of a work of literature is equal to the sum of its stylistic devices'."⁶

Well-known Soviet psychologist L. Vygotsky quotes Heine to compare the formalists with Staub the tailor, who charges the same amount for a coat made out of his own

¹ G. Vinokur, "Poetika. Lingvistika. Sotsiologiya" (Poetics. Linguistics. Sociology), *Let*, No. 3, 1923, p. 109.

² V. Shklovsky, *Rozanov*, Petrograd, 1921, p. 4.

³ V. Shklovsky, "Sviaz priemov siuzhetoslozheniya s obshchimi priemami stilya" (The Relation Between Plot Devices and Stylistic Devices), *Poetika*, issue 3, Petrograd, 1919, p. 143.

⁴ F. de Saussure, *Course de linguistique générale*, Paris, 1955, p. 43.

⁵ V. Shklovsky, "The Relation Between Plot Devices and Stylistic Devices", p. 143.

⁶ V. Shklovsky, *Rozanov*, p. 8.

cloth as for one made from the customer's. Vygotsky reasonably notes that not all tailors are like Staub; most often we pay for both the form and the material. . . .¹

What is the result of viewing a literary work as a sum of stylistic devices, a clot of "pure" relations? As V. Zhirmunsky demonstrated, it leads to verbal art being examined "by analogy with ornamental, that is, subjectless, art".² In this respect I. A. Vinogradov³ cited Pasternak's lines:

*If so I was a man, a meaningless assemblage
of lips, and eyes, and shoulders,
palms, and temples. . . .*

Indeed OPOYAZ's treatment makes a work of literature seem like just such a "meaningless assemblage" of various devices, and nothing more.

In his essay "Literary Analysis (Methodology)",⁴ M. Girshman notes the ties between the structuralist and OPOYAZ concepts of elements in a work. Formalists discarded "specific elements" as a fiction, an evil, harmful figment of the psychologists' imagination and emphasised only the means of constructing things (retardation, stringing together, stepped development, deformation, etc.). For structuralists any artistic text, even the most unique, is nothing but a combination of repeating, non-meaningful elements and may, in the final analysis, be broken down into these elements or their groups together with the exposition of the rules of syntagmatics. Quoting the theoreticians of OPOYAZ, structuralists see their greatest virtue in their authors' efforts to describe literary works as "sets of invariants discerned through their function in a system".⁵

It is telling that the representatives of the structural school of literary scholarship also love to compare art

¹ See L. S. Vygotsky, *Psikhologiya iskusstva* (The Psychology of Art), Moscow, 1968, p. 79-80.

² V. Zhirmunsky, *Literary Theory*, p. 12.

³ See I. Vinogradov, *Voprosy marksistskoi poetiki* (Problems of Marxist Poetics), Moscow, 1972, p. 208.

⁴ See *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 10, 1968.

⁵ A. Zholkovsky, Y. Shcheglov, "O vozmozhnostyakh postroyeniya strukturnoi poetiki" (On Possibilities for the Construction of Structural Poetics), in *Symposium on the Structural Study of Sign Systems*, p. 139.

to chess. In their opinion "a work of literature relates to life in the same way as a chess exercise to a chess match". Is this an accidental coincidence of formulations? No, it is more likely an organic closeness of methodological positions. Like their predecessors, the structuralists cannot, in M. Girshman's words, overcome "their notion of a ready-made content which accordingly is registered in the artistic structure"; fragmenting the work into lifeless elementary particles they inevitably kill it, writes the author.

Here Girshman is not precise. Structuralism does not simply fragment a work into elements, it attempts to "put it back together" again, to give it wholeness. But once an artistic phenomenon is taken apart it ceases to be itself. Regeneration is not in the nature of art for it is always unique.

In theory structuralism strives for dynamic wholeness; in practice it is dominated by fragmentation, for structural research is forced into studying separate things and is a "selection of details". Bulgarian scholar P. Zarev notes that it "rejects the old and traditional, allegedly unscientific study of literature as a complex integral unit".¹

Facts are facts: structuralism borrowed its most important definitive principle in its approach to art from the formalists—the concept of the closedness of the system and its immaculateness from meaning. It took many particular ideas from the arsenal of OPOYAZ, ideas where the general principles of this school found their refraction.

Ostranenie ("making strange") was particularly fortunate. This term was invented by V. Shklovsky; it implies removing an object from habitual relations and showing it in an unexpected, strange context in order to force the reader to view the object anew, to feel and experience it. This observation is not devoid of perception and was supported by rather interesting references to the style of Tolstoy. But the formalists went further. "Making strange" was made into an absolute and declared a general principle for the construction of literary works, whose

¹ Pantelei Zarev, *Strukturalizm, literaturoznanie i esteticeskii ideal* (Structuralism, Literary Scholarship and the Aesthetic Ideal), Sofia, 1969, p. 12.

goal was to "halt the attention", to remove the object from "automatic perception". This was regarded as a universal feature of the artistic.¹

This interpretation of the device is the one taken up by the structuralists. I. Revzin in his report "On the Semiotic Analysis of 'Secret Languages'" examines *ostranenie* both as a basic constitutive factor in the formation of thieves' jargon (which is proved in a very interesting way) and as "the basic principle of artistic construction".² Bertolt Brecht is often counted as one of the supporters of *ostranenie*. V. Shklovsky writes openly that the theory of *ostranenie* is "accepted by many people, including Brecht",³ with Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* in mind. This is not a simple problem and will require a special discussion. I only want to note that in my opinion this comparison is based on a superficial likeness rather than on the true closeness of the two phenomena; A. Dymshitz pointed this out in his preface to Horst Redeker's *Reflection and Action*. E. Surkov also effectively polemicalises with those inclined to treat *Verfremdungseffekt* in the spirit of the formalist *épatage* in his work on Brechtian aesthetics. The most convincing answer to the proponents of *ostranenie* was given by Brecht himself who repeatedly stressed that *Verfremdungseffekt* was primarily one of the paths toward a profound comprehension of the content of reality, and its goal—"to impress into the spectator an analytical, critical attitude to the depicted events".⁴ This is the fundamental difference between *Verfremdungseffekt* and *ostranenie* as treated by the formalists; the same is true of what the structuralists call "unexpected effect".

One telling example of the absolutisation of "the unexpected effect" is the attempt of French scholar A. Moles to express aesthetic originality through "a given numerical quantity". In *Information Theory and Aesthetic Perception* he compares the contemporary fine arts with the art of the late nineteenth century and concludes that "the volume of information, the unpredictability of

¹ V. Shklovsky, "Iskusstvo kak priyem" (Art as Device), *Poetika*, issue 2, Petrograd, 1917, p. 12.

² *Symposium on the Structural Study of Sign Systems*, p. 33.

³ V. Shklovsky, *Bowstring*, p. 351.

⁴ Brecht, *Versuche* 25/26/35, Heft 11, Berlin, 1955, S. 91.

messages in the arts are now incomparably greater". As a result there was a "growth of originality" which Moles finds most evident in surrealism and abstract art. Why are these movements placed in the forefront? Because normal relations with the external world "ceased or were reduced to zero" in them. Surrealism destroyed "perspective, functional relations, traditional relations between objects and their parts". Abstractionism destroyed "styles, traditional colour relations, etc."¹

Thus the best way to overcome "automatism" and achieve "the unexpected effect" is to destroy the inner structure of the depicted object and its relations with reality. It is quite logical that "originality" and "innovativeness" bought at such a price are the primary prerogatives of abstract art, concrete music, pop-art and trans-rational language.

About trans-rational language (*zaum*):

For OPOYAZ aestheticians this was an extremely important concept. It would not be an exaggeration to say that for the formalists trans-rational language was a model, an ideal, a goal for art. They ascribed a special, higher meaning to sound orchestration, word-combinations devoid of meaning, the pleasure taken in meaningless words. "Perhaps," wrote Shklovsky, "the pleasure occasioned by poetry consists primarily in pronunciation, in the peculiar dancing of the organs of speech."² This was connected to the thesis of the immanent value and self-sufficiency of sound in poetic language. Apart from Shklovsky's works, Yakubinsky deals with this in his essays "Concentration of Identical Liquids in Practical and Poetical Languages"; "On Poetic Glossemic Combinations"; "On the Sounds of Poetic Language".³ These theories engendered a wide following for the poet Velimir Khlebnikov, acclaimed by Tynyanov as "the Lobachevsky of the word"; the author continues, "It is impossible to foresee the limits of his catalysing influence."⁴

¹ Abraham Moles, *Théorie de l'information et perception esthétique*, Paris, 1972, p. 202, 203.

² S. Shklovsky, "O poezii i zaumnom yazyke" (Poetry and Trans-rational Language), *Poetika*, issue 3, p. 24.

³ See *Poetika*, issue 1, 1916; issue 2, 1917; issue 3, 1919.

⁴ Y. Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo yazyka* (Poetic Language), Moscow, 1965, pp. 292, 288.

Today some structuralist critics are attempting to galvanise interest in trans-rational language and the purely aural aspect of poetry. Boris Uspensky views as productive "some experimental combinations with zero meaning on which a conventional norm is projected". True he warns against a *preponderance* of such combinations, but the "aesthetic value" of trans-rational language leaves no doubt in his mind. Naturally this entails, if not the total discarding of meaning, its relegation to the role of a secondary arbitrary element. "Phonological likeness," affirms the scholar, "forces the poet to seek semantic relations between words as well [this 'as well' is characteristic-Y.B.]-thus phonetics give birth to meaning. . . ."

Naturally one cannot deny that in many cases phonetic phenomena can play a certain semantic-generating role. But it is one thing to see, as did Yakubinsky, "a dependence between the 'content' of a poem and its sounds"¹ and quite another to believe that "a certain set of sounds *suggests* [italics mine-Y.B.] the content to the artist",² as Uspensky does. One has to confess that modern structuralists treat the role of phonetics in the creative process in a way more characteristic of OPOYAZ than many authors belonging to that group. . . .

The obvious methodological closeness between structuralist poetics and the formal school is not denied by any of the structuralists but Lotman. We already know the opinion of Roman Jakobson on this account. We can add many others. American critic Victor Erlich calls structuralism "the final result of Formalist theoretizing"³ and makes wide use of the characteristically hyphenated "the Formalism-Structuralist Theory". R. Zaripov and Vyacheslav Vsev. Ivanov write that the works of OPOYAZ "directly prepared the soil for the precise description of the literary work" (and structuralism has pretensions to such a description-Y.B.) and that the studies of those years by Tomashevsky, Eichenbaum, Tynyanov, Shklovsky and

¹ L. Yakubinsky, "O zvukakh stikhotvornogo yazyka" (On the Sounds of Poetic Language), *Poetika*, issue 3, p. 24.

² *Symposium on the Structural Study of Sign Systems*, pp. 127-28.

³ Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism, History-Doctrine*, The Hague, 1965, p. 211.

other authors "anticipate many features characteristic of a cybernetic approach to art".¹

A. Zholkovsky and Y. Shcheglov stress that OPOYAZ "is more or less unanimously acknowledged as the predecessor of structuralism", and give high praise to Shklovsky's early work *Art as Device*,² although the author himself sees this as a distant stage in his work. In the preface to one of the works of Tartu University on sign systems, Tynyanov, one of the core-members of OPOYAZ, is called one of the founders of Soviet structural literary criticism,³ and the entire issue is devoted to his memory. Finally M. Sokolyansky, hinting at certain reasons of a "non-ideological character" that ostensibly caused the "formal school" to cease existing (former members wrote more than once that the group disintegrated due to an inner crisis) characterises today's tardy (as he sees it) interest in OPOYAZ in the following manner: "Following an unfortunate tradition, our native flax has been returned to us after a quarter of a century in the form of Holland cloth."⁴

One can dispute whether contemporary structuralism really borrows a great deal from Tynyanov (meaning his better works), but this is a different question. In any case the idea expressed in Jakobson's aphorism is supported by essentially all structuralists. If, as Lotman assumes, the question of the relation between structuralism and formalism is blown up out of proportion then it is above all the fault of his colleagues.

But it seems to me that there is no foundation whatsoever for speaking of "artificial hypertrophy". One has to look the facts in the eye.

II

Among Lotman's numerous reproaches of the "formal school" ("mechanical and inventarised" method, "mechan-

¹ R. Zaripov, Vyach. Ivanov, Afterword to the Russian translation of Abraham Moles' *Théorie de l'information et perception esthétique*, p. 342.

² A. Zholkovsky, Y. Shcheglov, "Strukturnaya poetika-porozhdayushchaya poetika" (Structural Poetics-Generational Poetics), *Voprosy literatury*, No. 1, 1967, p. 75.

³ *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, IV, p. 5.

⁴ M. G. Sokolyansky, "O strukturalizme v literaturovedenii" (Structuralist Literary Criticism), *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 7, 1969, p. 116.

ic assimilation of the binarism 'form-content' " and others) the most severe is its underestimation of history. Lotman stresses that members of OPOYAZ viewed the artistic device, not as a historically conditioned function, but as an element of form outside a real historical context, which made the very concept of device devoid of meaning and precluded a precise notion of the ideological-artistic unity of a work, "the unity of the planes of content and expression".¹

Such reproaches seem a bit unexpected from the lips of a proponent of structuralism and I will attempt to explain why. But first let's see if he is correct.

In order to "dissemble" a work of literature (as the theoreticians of OPOYAZ desired) one must first of all "bring it to a halt", remove it from the stream of history, cut out its past and close one's eyes beforehand to its possible future. Each literary phenomenon is a halted moment and is examined only in horizontal section, statically, as a sort of instant photograph. Movement is banished from history.

Characteristic in this respect is Eichenbaum's analysis of Gogol's "The Overcoat". Eichenbaum finds nothing in the story but devices related to *skaz*,² means of "constructing the *skaz* effect", and "the play of language". The criticism is perceptive; among the interesting observations are his comments on Gogol's "reproductional" form of *skaz* and the difference between this sort of narration and the ordinary speech in Ostrovsky's plays. But everything beyond this is of no value for the author. There are no spiritual empirics, no reflection of the author's personal feelings, no satire. There is only one goal (a goal and not a means)—"a play with reality", the violation of normal interrelations and connections. Eichenbaum disputes the views of scholars "hypnotised by Belinsky" who believe that Akaky Akakievich's spiritual world is insignificant. He argues with them, not because he believes that they are wrong and wishes to advance another theory. On the con-

¹ Y. M. Lotman, *Lektsii po strukturalnoi poetike* (Lectures on Structural Poetics), pp. 158, 159.

² *Skaz*—a form of narration whose linguistic peculiarities are such that the reader is obliged to distinguish between the presumed narrator and the author.—Tr.

trary, the world of Akaky Akakievich (and Eichenbaum uses this term only with the reservation "if such an expression is permissible") is valuable for Eichenbaum only as a sort of artificially created "concoction", as "a fantastic, closed, *personal* world". "This world has its own laws and proportions" and only in this respect is it interesting.

Naturally when such an approach is taken even the renowned "humane" point in Gogol's tale ("I'm your brother") loses any moral and especially social meaning. Eichenbaum flatly refuses to see this excerpt as "anything but a type of artistic device". Most important to him is the fact that the comic *skaz* is suddenly interrupted by a sentimental, melodramatic intonation and as a result of the convergence of these two contrasting elements a simple anecdote is elevated to the grotesque. This device, in Eichenbaum's opinion, is not subordinated to some task and carries no message, but is self-sufficient and attracts us as an element of play. "The point is not in Akaky Akakievich's 'insignificance'," writes Eichenbaum, "nor in the sermon on 'humaneness' towards one's younger brother, but that by fencing off his tale from the broad sphere of reality, Gogol... can play with all the norms and laws of real spiritual life."¹ Play in the name of what? That question is not posed.

Eichenbaum called his article "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' Was Made". Shklovsky has a work with a similar title: "How *Don Quixote* Was Made". Here too, as a result of "dissembling", the main character is reduced to a small screw, or, to be more precise, "a connecting thread" for Cervantes' thoughts. His contemporaries noted that Shklovsky's book on *Don Quixote* did not include *Don Quixote*, just as Sterne and Rozanov did not enter into his books about them. There was no mention of the historical conditions which made the image of the poor knight possible, nor of social, ideological or ethical factors.

Today in pointing out the similarity of titles in the two works, Shklovsky considers it necessary to stress that it was a mistake to use the word "made" since "a work of art is not made like an overcoat".² At the time, however, he wrote, "The type *Don Quixote*, so glorified by

¹ B. Eichenbaum, *Through Literature*, pp. 188, 190-92.

² V. Shklovsky, *Bowstring*, p. 22.

Heine and dwelt-upon by Turgenev, is not the initial purpose for which the author wrote the book. It is the result of the action of constructing the novel, just as frequently the mechanism of composition creates new forms in poetry."¹

This was OPOYAZ's notion of a fact of literary history, taken separately. How do these facts relate to each other? Even the formalists could not escape answering this question. And they did not. They only did it in their own way.

Confessing that "art is a constant process" (Eichenbaum) the formalists meant a process that was by its very nature immanent. The change of styles, schools or movements was not denied—that would have been impossible—but it was seen as a strictly "internal affair" of literature, something taking place in the closed space of the literary series with no relation to other series, to extra-literary reality. The formalists also sought the impetus for this process within literature itself; this led to the law of so-called "automatisation-perceptibility". They believed that this was the hidden source of the energy providing the impulses for the constant replacement of old, erased "automatised" literary forms by new, unusual, "perceptible" forms.

The history of literature was depicted as a process involving the constant destruction of canons, the constant negation of previous forms and their rejection; the new forms that replaced them turned out not to be new at all but simply forgotten old forms. Most important was the effect of the unexpected, unfamiliarity, *ostranenie*, shifts, displacement.

The principle of literary continuity was frequently subjected to irony by the members of OPOYAZ. Tynyanov considered traditional literary history to be confined to the chain: "Lomonosov begat Derzhavin, Derzhavin begat Zhukovsky, Zhukovsky begat Pushkin, Pushkin begat Lermontov. . . ." "We forget," writes the critic, "that Derzhavin was Lomonosov's heir only when he had dethroned his ode; that Pushkin inherited the major forms of the eighteenth century when he had created a major form out of the Karamzinians' trifles; that all these writers could be the

¹ V. Shklovsky, *Razvertiyvanie syuzheta* (The Denouement of Plot), Petrograd, 1921, p. 34.

heirs of their predecessors only because they displaced their style and genres. We forget that each new phenomenon of displacement is extraordinarily complex; that one can speak of succession only with regard to such phenomena as schools, epigones, but not about literary evolution as such whose main principle is struggle and displacement."¹

So what is the outcome?

It turns out that Nekrasov became Nekrasov thanks only to the vaudeville writer Belopyatkin (his earlier pseudonym) who destroyed literary canons; allegedly the struggle against canonical forms led Nekrasov to turn to folklore and themes from the people's life. It turns out that Chekhov is interesting primarily because he introduced the themes, style and manner of *Budilnik* (The Alarm Clock) and Blok because he used the devices of the Gypsy romance; and allegedly both were influenced by *ostranenie*. One of his contemporaries noted that from the formalist point of view all inscriptions on the monuments to poets should be erased for they speak in some way of the contents of their works. These would be substituted with inscriptions like "To Pushkin, initiator of deep rhymes" or "To Lermontov, unforgettable founder of the use of conversational syntax in poetry".²

The members of OPOYAZ have left many writings. There is much of value in them. It would be a loss to science and unjust if we ignored their observations on the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, Nekrasov and Tolstoy (Eichenbaum), or Küchelbeker (Tynyanov), their histories of individual literary types, genres or devices. Their search for governing impulses within literature that would assure—without the incursion of non-aesthetic factors—the replaceability of forms, in several instances led them to conclusions of historical and theoretical interest.

In addition we should not forget about a certain evolution in the outlook of the representatives of the formal school. It is interesting, for example, to compare Eichen-

¹ Y. Tynyanov, "O literaturnom fakte" (Literary Facts), *Lef*, No. 2 (6), 1924, p. 104.

² These are the words uttered by Prof. G. A. Rachinsky at a conference in the Poetics office of the Bryusov Institute of Literature, cited from M. Grigoryev's *Literatura i ideologiya* (Literature and Ideology), Moscow, 1929, p. 25.

baum's books on Tolstoy. In the first interesting facts and observations are almost lost in a cloud of purely OPOYAZ conceptions and propositions, such as his proposed scheme for the course of nineteenth century Russian prose, which is reduced to an alternation of narrative, subjective, and *skaz* forms, among others. The same is true of the characterisation of realism as "a conventional, constantly repeated slogan whereby a new literary school struggles against the antiquated, ossified devices of the 'old school', which have become clichés and are accordingly too conventional". The author of *The Young Tolstoy* presumes that realism "does not designate anything positive in itself since its content is determined, not by comparison with life, but by comparison with another system of artistic devices".¹ In later works, on Tolstoy, Eichenbaum gets rid of a good deal of his formalist conceptions.

The work of OPOYAZ members on the theory and history of parody has a certain value. They saw this as one of the most effective means of destroying canonised literary forms, as an extreme expression of shifts and displacement. Eichenbaum's analysis of Nekrasov's work concentrates on his early parodies for just this reason.

Tynyanov's *Dostoevsky and Gogol (Towards a Theory of Parody)*—an extraordinary work—reveals the principal methodological weakness of the formalist conception of literary history. Tynyanov wishes to prove that "Dostoevsky clearly begins in the tradition of Gogol"; in particular the character Foma Fomich Opiskin parodies the author of *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*. We will not dwell on this insufficiently substantiated conception. Rather we should stress that the scholar does not reveal the ideological or moral meaning of this episode in the history of Russian literature, but skirts the issue entirely. He speaks only of one element of "the dialectical shift in schools". Dostoevsky's constant, persistent introduction of literature in his works is seen by Tynyanov as merely "a convenient parodic device".²

¹ B. Eichenbaum, *Molodoy Tolstoy* (The Young Tolstoy), Petrograd-Berlin, 1922, p. 99.

² Y. Tynyanov, *Dostoevsky i Gogol (K teorii parodii)* [Dostoevsky and Gogol (Towards a Theory of Parody)], Petrograd, 1921, pp. 6, 22.

Many people have noted this feature of formalist literary theory. B. Engelhardt, for example, agreeing that the formalist principles of "wear-renewal" and the shift from old lines to new ones facilitate "an immanent aesthetic interpretation of the phenomena of literary evolution", notes: "Whether the evolutionary pattern based on these principles corresponds to concrete historical reality is another question."¹ True, the scholar believes that the pattern still has some value, but essentially his criticism is fatal for the formalist history of literature.

Zhirmunsky, who had many disputes over principles with more orthodox members of OPOYAZ, decidedly objected to the announcement that the device was the only factor in literary development. Without denying the extant, though altogether relative autonomy of the aesthetic series, he believed that "the impulses of development within an isolated sphere often enter this sphere from without". "It is only proper," wrote Zhirmunsky, "that in studying Nekrasov as a poet, we start with the influence of Belinsky and his circle which gave rise to many new poetic themes; historically such an explanation would be more accurate than the recently proposed theory that political themes appeared in Nekrasov as the 'confirmation' of the pressing need to break with exhausted poetic traditions of Pushkin's epoch."²

Lunacharsky entered into fierce polemics with Eichenbaum, who, in his view, was far too adamant in stressing that literary scholarship was *not merely* a part of cultural history. True, Eichenbaum, who had thoroughly studied literary history, was perhaps less guilty of anti-historicism than some of his colleagues. In his work on Nekrasov he opposes the isolation of a writer from historical laws and speaks of the need to "listen to the voice of history".³ And yet Lunacharsky was right in reproaching the formalists for separating theory from practice. This separation, this transformation of grammar, stylistics and poetics into scholastic rules casts doubt on the scholarly and cultural value of that theory. "We are not at all interested in this sort of approach to literature," writes Lunacharsky, "for

¹ B. Engelhardt, *Formalny metod v istorii literatury* (The Formal Method in Literary History), Leningrad, 1927, pp. 104-05.

² V. Zhirmunsky, *The Theory of Literature*, pp. 163, 162.

³ B. Eichenbaum, *On Poetry*, p. 38.

it is outside the history of *culture* and from its very inception is outside of *history*."¹

Strictly speaking, the formalist history of literature is a false one. One can hardly give another name to the rotation of self-sufficient devices undefiled by life's touch, this *perpetuum mobile* of two lines. There can be no talk of development or progressive movement. We are faced with a succession of levels, horizontal "sections" of literature whose succession does not constitute literary history any more than a combination of frames from a film constitutes a film.

As we see, Lotman's diagnosis of the main ills of formalism is quite accurate. Why then does it leave us with a sense of some paradox?

In fact structuralism has extremely complex, as yet unclear relations with history. There is some reason to believe that it conflicts with history, and one of the sources of this conflict is the linguistic theories of F. de Saussure (connected with the methodology of the "formal school"), which contain many principles that have given impetus to structuralist thought. I am speaking of the principle which has become a sort of methodological foundation for both formalism and structuralism—the division between synchrony and diachrony.

"Certainly all sciences would profit by indicating more precisely the coordinates along which their subject matter is aligned. Everywhere distinctions should be made... between 1) *the axis of simultaneities*, which stands for the relations of coexisting things and from which the intervention of time is excluded; and 2) *the axis of successions*, on which only one thing can be considered at a time, but upon which are located all the things on the first axis together with their changes."² The first aspect is static and reflects the status quo, a given state. This is the *synchronic* section. The second aspect concerns evolution, dynamics, history; the facts are seen in their development and this development, these shifts in the system occur under the influence of various external factors which are isolated

¹ A. V. Lunacharsky, "Formalizm v nauke ob iskusstve" (Formalism in Art Scholarship), *Collected Works* in eight volumes, Vol. 7, Moscow, 1967, p. 417.

² F. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Paris, 1971, p. 115.

from each other and do not fit into a system. This is the *diachronic* section.

The author of *Course in General Linguistics* attempts to use examples from life to illustrate his points more clearly. The diachronic approach to, say, an orchard would entail attention to the sorts of trees, their number, by whom and at what time the orchard was planted, its owner and yield; synchronically the most important fact would be that the trees in this orchard were planted in rows that slant. Chess also serves as an example. The fact that the game was originally developed in Persia and then came to Europe does not reflect on the game because it is an external, historical fact. Here internal facts connected to the rules of play, the *system*, have a decisive effect on the game. "...Everything that changes the system in any way is internal."¹

This distinction between synchrony and diachrony as applied to the science of language allowed Saussure to create two types of linguistics: synchronic—the study of elements interrelated and forming a system, and diachronic—the study of elements related by succession. The first is primary since for Saussure, only the synchronic aspect of language is "the true and sole reality for the community of speakers".² For the speaker the temporal succession of linguistic facts, the genesis and history of language, do not exist: "He is confronted with a state. That is why the linguist who wishes to understand a state must discard all knowledge of everything that produced it and ignore diachrony."³

To ignore does not mean to deny altogether. Saussure acknowledges that diachronic or external linguistics is important, but, as he sees it, in order to comprehend a language as a system, its internal organism, its "mechanism", it is not necessary to know the conditions under which the language has evolved, to research historical, political, cultural or ethnographic influences. Only one thing is important—the *state* of the language. The neglect of diachrony is a sort of convention, a methodological device which helps achieve a profound comprehension of this state and its productivity for linguistic scholarship was confirmed by the achievements of structural linguistics.

¹ Ibid., p. 43.

² Ibid., p. 128.

³ Ibid., p. 117.

This is important for the *science of language*. True, Saussure noted that the distinction between the axis of simultaneities and successions would be of profit to "all sciences", but in practice he proposed his methodology for linguistics and did not insist upon universal application.

Incidentally, many linguists stress that even in regard to the sphere of language the Saussurian antinomy "synchrony–diachrony" is quite hypothetical. Shortly after the appearance of *Course in General Linguistics*, in 1917, Austrian scholar Hugo Schuchardt commented with regard to Saussure's proposal of the axis of simultaneities and the axis of successions: "Rest and movement (that latter in its broadest sense) in language, as in other spheres, are not apposing poles: only movement is real, rest is simply an illusion."¹

Pure synchrony is an abstraction—bold, interesting, in many ways a productive method, but still an abstraction. A horizontal section cannot give an exhaustive notion of the state of a language, for, as one contemporary scholar notes, it "always is a 'result' of a preceding state". The real state of a language will inevitably differ from the "projected" state which is made through synchronic description. "To stress the importance of synchrony is not to correspondingly underestimate the role of diachrony: the real result of a tradition is always described. True, in a *pure* description of a tradition it does not figure and is ignored, but this does not mean that it does not exist or that it does not determine language. Non-historicity (synchrony) is part of the *essence of description*, not of the *essence of language*."²

If linguists are so careful, should not literary scholarship be twice as careful in its dealings with thoroughly historical, thoroughly personal phenomena?

A. Potebnya wrote that, "the history of literature should grow increasingly closer to the history of language; without this it is as unscientific as physiology without

¹ H. Schuchardt, "Ferdinand de Saussure, Cours de linguistique générale", *Literaturblatt für germanische und romanische Philologie*, XXXVIII Jahrgang, No. 1, 2, Leipzig, 1917, S. 4.

² Eugenio Coseriu, *Synchronia, Diachronia e Historia*, Montevideo, 1958, pp. 11, 15-16.

chemistry".¹ A. Veselovsky likewise viewed historical poetics as a science contiguous with linguistics. The formalists borrowed synchrony from linguistics and attempted to make it a universal key. Eichenbaum's proposal to "begin from the middle" in literary studies, "from that point where we find the fact of art"² was nothing more than an extrapolation of Saussure's devices, their application to literature. When it was used as a methodological device, synchrony helped the members of OPOYAZ study the "mechanism" of a work of literature, or, to be more precise, its individual parts and junctions. But as an absolute principle isolated from diachrony it became an obstacle to the comprehension of the principles by which the mechanism acted; it prevented them from seeing it in action. Synchrony facilitated the "disassembling" of literature which, as a rule, was masterfully accomplished by the formalists. Unfortunately after such an operation they were faced with a corpse—they had killed the living spirit and flesh of literature.

Structuralism applies the tools and methods of modern linguistics not only to the study of literature, but to all the social sciences.

We are referring above all to the Saussurian principle of synchronic description and the teachings of Trubetzkoy on the semantic-differentiating value of phonemes in their oppositions (system of oppositions).

"Two things can be distinguished," writes Trubetzkoy in his *Principles of Phonology*, "only insofar as they are contrasted to each other, in other words, only insofar as there exists a relation of contrast or opposition between them."³ Trubetzkoy himself studied phonological oppositions, sound oppositions which could differentiate the meaning of two words in a given language. But structuralists believe that this principle can be applied outside of phonology and linguistics in general. For them *Principles of Phonology* and the works of Roman Jakobson, in partic-

¹ A. A. Potebnya, *Mysl i yazyk* (Thought and Language), Odessa, 1922, p. 182.

² Quoted from *Michigan Slavic Materials*, No. 2, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1962, p. 4.

³ N. S. Trubetzkoy, *Grundzüge der Phonologie*, Prague, 1939, S. 30.

ular his book on Czech prosody¹ that shows the relation of phonology to verse, became the impulse and spring board for a search for the main "spring" in the mechanism of the work of art.

This is not only true of literary scholarship. The universality of linguistics is affirmed by ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss who repeatedly refers to it, particularly to phonology, as a model of the application of structural methods to the humanities. Lévi-Strauss believes that phonology must play the sort of innovative role in the social sciences as nuclear physics played with regard to the exact sciences.

History naturally is moved to the background. There is no need to speak of extreme structuralists like, for example, Michel Foucault, who insists that historicism is an exhausted, inconsequential approach. Even in the works of Lévi-Strauss, who usually stresses his respect for history, it is accorded a secondary role. Lévi-Strauss feels that contemporary traditional history is not a sufficiently objective discipline and there is inevitably a subjective selection of dates, phenomena and events; such subjectivism, in his opinion, lowers the scientific value of history and, at the same time, makes it discrete, opening wide possibilities for the application of structural methods. Like Saussure, Lévi Strauss does not deny diachrony, but prefers synchrony. He stresses that the historical approach can only help us understand how certain social institutions arise, while a genuinely scientific study of society requires an exclusively synchronic study, the revelation of formal structural relations between social institutions, relations stemming from the unconscious nature of collective phenomena.

This allows the opponents of structuralism to accuse them of anti-historicism; Jean-Paul Sartre, in a polemic with Lévi-Strauss, even speaks of "the discreditation of history".²

The extrapolation of the ideas of Trubetzkoy and Saussure in literary scholarship reaches an extreme in the view that poetics is a component of linguistics, and litera-

¹ Roman Jakobson, *O cheshskom stikhe preimushchestvenno v sopostavlenii s russkim* (Czech Verse, Primarily in Comparison with Russian Verse), 1923.

² See "Jean-Paul Sartre répond", *L'Arc*, No. 30, 1966, p. 89.

ture is merely language organised in a special way. This point of view, which has its supporters in this country as well, was formulated by Roman Jakobson in his speech at the conference "Style in Language", held in 1958 at the University of Indiana (USA).¹

We will not detail this conception and the discussion of it² with its accurate ideas and extreme views on both sides. But I would like to point out that Jakobson's hypothesis goes back to the theories of OPOYAZ on "poetical" and "practical" languages and has something in common with that author's early formula: "Poetry is language in its aesthetic function."³

Particularly interesting in this respect is the criticism levied on Jakobson's conception by his former colleague, Victor Shklovsky.

Commenting on Jakobson's "The Poetry of Grammar and the Grammar of Poetry", Shklovsky notes that "linguistics attacks poetics without even a preliminary salvo". Without in the least diminishing the role and significance of structural linguistics or excluding the use of various of its achievements in the study of literature (since in the final analysis a poem is created within the sphere of language) one cannot, nevertheless, automatically apply the laws of linguistic structures to other structures. "The transfer of the rules of grammar to poetry implies the affirmation of one structure's universal applicability which has not yet been proved."

In Shklovsky's opinion, Jakobson's hypothesis contains "the inertial elements of structuralism as a phenomenon

¹ See Roman Jakobson, *Linguistics and Poetics, Style in Language*, ed. by Thomas Sebeok, New York-London, 1960.

² See P. Palievsky, "Vnutrenniaya struktura obraza" (The Internal Structure of the Image), *Teoriya literatury* (Literary Theory), Moscow, 1962; V. Kozhinov, "Khudozhestvennaya rech kak forma iskusstva slova" (Dialogue as a Verbal Art Form), *Literary Theory*, Moscow, 1965; V. N. Toporov, "Annotatsiya na rabotu R. Yakobsona 'Lingvistika i poetika'" (Notes on Jakobson's *Linguistics and Poetics*), *Strukturno-tipologicheskiye issledovaniya* (Structural-Typological Studies), Moscow, 1962; V. P. Grigoryev, *Slovar russkoy sovetskoy poezii* (A Dictionary of Soviet Russian Poetry), Moscow, 1965; V. P. Grigoryev, "O zadachakh lingvisticheskoy poetiki" (The Tasks of Linguistic Poetics), Proceedings of USSR Academy of Sciences: Literature and Language Series, Vol. XXV, issue 6, 1966, among other works.

³ R. Jakobson, *Modern Russian Poetry*, p. 11.

born of linguistic analysis and attempting to remain within the sphere of language, that is, attempting to transfer the laws of linguistic structures to other orders". Such an approach disregards the laws of art "squeezing the poetry from life".

Jakobson's analysis of Pushkin's poem "I loved you. . ." is telling. His discussion of the grammatical forms is beyond reproach, and yet it does not bring the poem close to the reader. We learn that the poem contains forty-seven words: 14 pronouns, 10 verbs and only 5 abstract nouns; that there is not one adjective in the work, while the number of adverbs is ten. We follow—and not without interest—his investigation of the interrelations between the pronoun "I" which only occurs in the nominative case and the pronoun "You" which occurs in the accusative and dative cases, noting that the first occurs four times in the text and the second—six,¹ and so on and so forth. No doubt this sort of grammatical analysis of the text is a useful aid to understanding, but can it reveal the secret of the artistic impact of the poem? Something elusive but extremely important, some key element is left out. As Shklovsky notes, the poem is analysed "like a shadow rather than a thing".²

The same is true of Jakobson's analysis of Khristo Botev's poem "The Execution of Vassil Levsky". True, the scholar does not manage to totally cut off the poem's connection to the epoch and social life. Jakobson notes that the poet "always shunned ornamentation, and sermons on art for art's sake", that "these are the verses of a revolutionary agitator", and promises to subordinate his linguistic analysis to the revelation of precisely these features.

Nevertheless here too linguistics cramps poetics, and what is more—poetry. The careful, scrupulous analysis of grammatical forms and phonological features overshadows everything else. The poem is turned into something dissected and fragmented; the integrity of the poetic conception and the emotional effect are lost. Questions of the

¹ See Roman Jakobson, "The Poetry of Grammar and the Grammar of Poetry", *Poetics, Poetyka, Poetika*, I, Warsaw, 1961, p. 405.

² V. Shklovsky, "Poeziya grammatiki i grammatika poezii" (The Poetry of Grammar and the Grammar of Poetry), *Inostrannaya literatura*, No. 6, 1969, pp. 218, 220, 221, 223, 224.

poet's affinity with the people, the relation between his work and folk traditions, while not entirely overlooked, are treated in passing and one-sidedly in terms of "ready models" which the poet surmounted (also mentioned in this respect are J. Kral and T. Shevchenko), a rejection of the canons of "folk poetry". The author of "The Execution of Vassil Levsky" appears more as an experimenter than a revolutionary agitator which is not in accordance with his human or poetic image, nor with a true analysis of the verse treated by Jakobson.¹

From these examples it is obvious that structuralism is prone to forget the fact that a work of literature is written in a certain historical context and in addition has its own history; rather it dries and kills the artistic fabric. Before our eyes a work is transformed from a living organism to a sum of faceless grammatical categories.

This "anti-historicism" is inherited from OPOYAZ. How unfortunate that Lotman, who justly criticises formalism, remains silent about such a substantial circumstance.

In "Pasternak's Early Poetry and the Structural Study of the Text",² Lotman expresses the idea that the elucidation of synchronic relations between structural elements of a text, which presupposes its analysis exclusively from the perspective of its internal, immanent structure, is only the first step. The next is "the growth of interest in a diachronic study of structures", the activation of the attention of structuralists "to processes, to movement". From this point of view the poetical texts of Pushkin and Pasternak are analysed.

Lotman focuses attention on the process of the generation of a poetic text, or, in other words, a certain hierarchy, succession of models reflecting the artist's quest for a final variant. Following several examples of this process Lotman strives to determine regular features and norms, "strata of rules" which determine the generation of a poetic text. Comparison of the rough drafts of Pushkin and Pasternak leads him to conclude that we are dealing with different models of the generation of a text, two

¹ Prof. R. O. Jakobson, "Strukturata na posledното Botevo stikhotvorenie" (The Structure of Botev's Last Work), *Ezik i literatura*, No. 2, 1961, pp. 3-4, 7, 17.

² See *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, IV, *Uchenye zapiski Tarskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, issue 236, 1969.

polar principles of its generative construction, and this in itself can hardly be called uninteresting.

One is struck, however, by a characteristic feature of the methodology employed in analysing the rough drafts of both poets. That characteristic feature is this: the objective factors which have a decisive impact on the poet when he determines which variant is "right", are always narrowly aesthetic and in fact technical in nature. The critic is concerned primarily with the way the poet violates literary norms and automatised traditions, contrasting new models of "deautomatised" texts to texts in the tradition of the philistine aesthetic of "common sense", and so on. Other factors are ignored. Lotman acknowledges that criticism "is not interested in philosophy or an aesthetic system", but "the language of the epoch's culture".¹

True, with regard to Pushkin's manuscripts Lotman does mention *inter alia* norms that guarantee the "rightness" of the text "from the perspective of the poet's philosophy and his comprehension of the laws of reality". But this does not have any practical effect on the analysis of Pushkin's verse in the essay. The main point is quite different. In complete correspondence with the theories of OPOYAZ, in particular Eichenbaum² (although without any acknowledgement of this), Lotman discusses *Ruslan and Lyudmila*: "Pushkin consciously violated the automatised traditions of correspondence of plot, genre and style. The first line of the poem is a quotation from Ossian and should have had a certain continuation—meditative, elegiac, national-romantic, heroic. Instead the reader confronts irony, a frivolous love story which, as criticism of the time shows, profoundly shocked him."³

In the analysis of Pasternak's manuscripts we do not discover the "norms of the third stratum", that is, the norms of his philosophy; we do not even find them in the form of "the common semantic field in which the text moves", as was the case in the analysis of Pushkin's manuscripts. Here these norms are entirely dissolved in such categories as "the visual world", "the perceived idea", "combinations of words", and so on. Lotman

¹ *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, IV, p. 235.

² See B. Eichenbaum, *On Poetry*, p. 160.

³ *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, IV, p. 218.

assumes that "all basic aspects of social problems—from love to revolution—are embodied in Pasternak's lyrics in the form of various types of plots constructed from three basic components: 'I', 'nature' and 'woman' ". In my opinion Pasternak's early lyrics, no matter what one thinks of them, do not fit into the Procrustean bed of this triad; being a living, complex phenomenon, it inevitably "splashes out" of the framework of the proposed pattern.

The theory is not confined to Pasternak; Lotman tries to make it universal, affirming that these elements ("I", "nature", "woman") are "sufficient for the construction of any social or cosmic model".¹

I must confess that I do not discern anything in this conception which would indicate that Lotman is taking the promised stride in the direction of diachronic analysis of structures. These are the same synchronic sections, the same immanent structures, except that they look like they are being applied in a historico-literary context. If there is some "process, movement" here—it is within a literary series, a process by which one variant of a poetic text is replaced with another; if there is any history—it is the history of individual manuscripts.

Once again a historical literary analogy is thrust upon us. Toward the end of the twenties, when the sterility of formalist conceptions had become obvious, formalist theoreticians attempted to overcome the obstacle of "anti-historicity". Tynyanov's and Jakobson's theses, "Problems in the Study of Literature and Language" state that "while the sharp distinction between synchronic and diachronic sections" was a "productive working hypothesis", it is already a stage in the past; it is now clear that "each synchronic system has its own future and past" and this "obliges us to re-examine the principles of diachrony as well".² The idea seemed to be a good one. But what were the results? What is the real meaning of Tynyanov's and Eichenbaum's theories of "literary evolution" and "literary life" that claim to shift (in those years they spoke a lot about "shifts") formalism toward historicism?

Tynyanov attempted to make his interpretation of poetic constructions less static, to lend it flexible quality by

¹ Ibid., p. 235.

² *Novy Let*, No. 12, 1928, p. 36.

basing it on the principle of dynamism, of "struggle and replacement", literary changeability. This was in a sense a stride forward in comparison with early formalism, but it was too timid and partial a step. In fact such concepts as the closedness of the literary series and the immanence of its laws remained intact. No wonder that Tynyanov spoke about the *evolution* of literature, in contrast to its *genesis*. This helped to guard the purity of the immanence of the literary series. When Tynyanov posed the question of the "constant interrelatedness" of the literary series with other series,¹ he was primarily speaking of the closest series—literary life.

The theory of "literary life" (Eichenbaum paid particular attention to its substantiation) was called upon to freshen up "the formal method" and bring it closer to the real literary process, to history. Eichenbaum senses that life itself clearly shows "the dependence of literature and literary evolution on conditions that take shape outside of literature".² But as he saw it these conditions could presently be reduced to a sum of facts characterising the professional life of the writer, what he called "literary life", but not any concrete socio-historical circumstances or life of society. The previous immanent study of literary "things" was supplemented by a study of the professional milieu, literary circles, salons, journals, publishing houses, book stores, et al. This aspect of literature is also important, but in itself it does not bring literature closer to history or the life of society. "Contrasting class life with literary life," writes one contemporary, "formalist theoreticians are unable to establish the latter's influence on poetic structure. Studying the 'professionalisation of writing' they substitute the object with another. In the first case they cease to be sociologists, in the second—literary scholars."³

Their efforts to break into history were unsuccessful.

¹ Y. Tynyanov, "Vopros o literaturnoy evolutsii" (The Problem of Literary Evolution), *Na literaturnom postu*, No. 10, 1927, p. 46.

² B. Eichenbaum, *Moy vremennik. Slovesnost, nauka, kritika, smes* (My Chronicle: Verbal Art, Science, Criticism and Assorted Other Things), Leningrad, 1929, p. 51.

³ A. Tseitlin, "Ot 'literatury' k 'kommertsii'" (From "Literature" to "Commerce"), *Literatura i marksizm*, Book I, 1929, p. 164.

The earlier static wheels now turned, but there still was no movement: the wheels merely began to skid. . . .

Could it have been any other way? Hardly. The leaders of the "formal school" were serious scholars and sincerely attempted to find a way out of their anti-historical blind alley; but they refused to part with their main principles, which inherently contradicted a historical approach. The gap between synchrony and diachrony, between literary series and history constituted the methodological foundations of the "formal school". "Evolution within the boundaries of formalism"¹ was the most that could be achieved without a profound break.

This lesson of formalism is very instructive. The desire to "improve" structuralism, to reconcile it with history and life of society is praiseworthy. It would be commendable if the proponents of structuralism managed to go beyond the comparison of various manuscripts (with which, as they themselves acknowledge, traditional textology deals quite satisfactorily), go beyond the limits of the closed literary series, beyond immanent structure, and actually bridge the fatal gap between synchrony and diachrony. But we should realise to what degree this is actually a reality. Roland Barthes, for example, rejects literary history altogether; and this cannot be shrugged off as coincidental. If a work of art is considered as a closed, formal structure, if the logical relations between this structure and meaning of a literary work are severed, then the work will inevitably be taken out of its historical literary context; literature as such, in R. Schober's words, appears "as a gigantic heap of disparate pieces. . .".

This is why although I agree with Lotman's slogan "*in step with history*", and not "*instead of history*",² I find myself asking: would structuralism still be structuralism if that were the case?

III

Michel Foucault, author of the controversial French book *Les mots et les choses*,³ is not one to skimp on

¹ P. N. Medvedev quotes remarks made by Eichenbaum at a writers' conference in 1933 in *Formalism and Formalists*, p. 196.

² See Y. Lotman, "Literaturovedenie dolzhno byt nauкой" (Literary Scholarship Should Be a Science), *Voprosy literatury*, No. 1, 1967.

³ Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, Paris, 1966.

paradoxes. What is man? Myth, answers Foucault. A figment of someone's imagination. A temporal philosophical error. Foam on the seashore. Nothing but laughter, in Foucault's opinion, can answer those who love to meditate on the nature of man. . . .

Foucault's paradoxes are a most attractive target for the polemicist, but above all one should know with whom Foucault is arguing and about what. What lies behind his preaching of "the anti-man"? Might this not elucidate some aspects of the social and philosophical nature of structuralism, since Foucault is one of its adepts?

It seems that nowhere was the discussion of structuralism so heated and prolific as in France. No doubt the presence of Lévi-Strauss "himself" is a stimulus in this respect. It is said that "structuralism is Lévi-Strauss". But there must be other, more objective reasons.

For almost one-third of a century existentialism reigned in France. Here the philosophy of existence seemed the closest to earthly cares and human experience. During the Resistance, the categories of rebellion and negation took on historical, even political significance; existentialism became a participant in the national efforts for liberation and the struggle against fascism. During the postwar years as well, existentialism was professed by a whole generation of Frenchmen. For many Sartre's militant subjectivism, an ecstatic affirmation of the individual seemed to be a counterbalance to the blind, alienating force of bourgeois relations, a spiritual safety-valve, glimmer of hope, a hint as to the true perspective.

These hopes were not fated to be realised. It became more and more obvious that existentialism was not able to solve constructive problems; it was old-fashioned and did not reflect the spirit of the times. Individualism faded and retreated; the individual was levelled and it was more clearly demonstrated that his existence and behaviour was dependent on objective structures. Existentialism began to retreat as well. Westerners began to proclaim its crisis, fall and their disillusionment with this philosophy.

Under these conditions structuralism came to the forefront. "A cold shower came down on existentialist mythology," confesses one critic (from a position of Christian

personalism, it should be added).¹ Having declared war on subjectivism, structuralism could not help but confront existentialism, and France was the arena where the cruellest clashes took place.

One should examine Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* in the context of this polemic. This is one episode in the "battle of titans" which broke out in the field of philosophy; the book plays the part of a strike force. For the author of this book the quintessence of existentialism with all its subjectivist illusions is to be found in the concept "man" and that is why he attacks man with such virulence and polemic acuteness. "Tired, as all of us were," writes Guy Besse, "of discussions on the 'individual', who, without knowing what or whom he is talking about, naïvely takes himself to be the measure of all things, Foucault examines the concepts 'man' and 'humanism' as remnants of the 'knowledge' which does not meet the requirements of the present, to say nothing of the future."² This does not prevent Besse from seeing the book as somewhat of a disappointment.

How can Marxists react to this polemic and its participants?

This is a particularly pressing problem because both sides are not loath to accept Marxism as an ally. Sartre's efforts to integrate certain elements of Marxism with the philosophical system of existentialism are well known; we will not dwell on them here, but will only note that in themselves such attempts are symptomatic. Structuralism, for its part, also seeks contiguity with Marxism. Lévi-Strauss has frequently stressed his reverence for Marx. Roman Jakobson in an interview given in Paris several years ago announced that he saw no contradictions between the structural method and Marxism; true this only applied if one took care not to confuse genuine Marxism with its caricature.

There are also counter-efforts. Maurice Godelier believes that the structural approach to social reality does not contradict Marxism at all but, on the contrary, helps

¹ J.-M. Domenach, "Le système et la personne", *Esprit*, No. 5, 1967, p. 778.

² Guy Besse, "Rol marksistiskoy-leninskoy filosofii v sovremennoy ideologicheskoy borbe" (The Role of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy in the Contemporary Ideological Struggle), *Kommunist*, No. 8, 1968, p. 25.

one to comprehend more clearly relations between the basis and the superstructure. A group of French writers headed by L. Althusser tries to analyse Marx from a structuralist position and show him as one of the precursors of this school in their collective work *Lire le Capital*.¹ One could also point to the special issue of the French journal *La Pensée*.²

So, structuralism and Marxism. . . .

Here one is immediately obliged to discuss historical parallels and they will not, I think, seem out of place after what has already been said above regarding the living threads which tie structuralism to formalism. Moreover the lessons of the past, as we know, also help us to better comprehend the present.

There was a time when formalism and Marxism were seen as a "match", and it was viewed as being in the interests of Marxism, even if it was a "mesalliance". One of the authors of the magazine *Lef* asked, "Is the formal method as treated by OPOYAZ of use to Marxists?" And he answered without hesitation, "Of course. The immediate task of Marxist methodology is to accept it, for it represents the only possibility for the Marxist method to become scientific." The author claims that given the present state of Marxist scholarship (which he expresses in the following way: "Marxist concept of aesthetics still does not exist") the formal method represents the only means of salvation, being "the most necessary, the most immediate, the most productive."³

It is interesting that the formalists began with a unanimous, active rejection of Marxism. Less than a year earlier than the aforementioned call for the "enrichment" of the Marxist method through the formal method, B. Eichenbaum wrote an article criticising the Marxist approach to art as utilitarian and vulgar. This article shows the author's unmistakable antipathy to Marxism and his patent non-comprehension of it. He explained the success of Marxism in Russia by the fact that "Russian people

¹ See Louis Althusser, Jacques Rancière, Pierre Macherey, *Lire le Capital*, tome I; Louis Althusser, Etienne Balibar, Roger Establet, *Lire le Capital*, tome II, Paris, 1965.

² See *La Pensée*, No. 135, 1967.

³ A. Tseitlin, "Marksisty i 'formalny metod'" (Marxists and the "Formal Method"), *Lef*, No. 3, 1923, pp. 115, 130, 131.

loved to learn from German scholars, because they had no scientific world outlook of their own, only a taste for it"; and that, ostensibly, is why the Marxist "monistic view" was so easily inculcated in them. Marx, says Eichenbaum, "like a true German, reduced entire life to 'economics' ". In Marxist patterns "art did not fit and so it was discarded. Let it exist as a 'reflection'. Sometimes useful for enlightenment". This horrid caricature of the Marxist conception of art was, naturally, not to his liking. "Life isn't going according to Marx," wrote the critic. "All the better for us!"¹

One can interpret the OPOYAZ theoreticians' wariness with regard to "economics" as a reaction against vulgar sociological tendencies. Eichenbaum has some justification in stating that "the class struggle does not always coincide with the literary struggle and literary groupings", and that literature should not be made "the servant of law and economics".² There were many such vulgar sociological interpretations of art at the time. But this is only part of the truth. The formalists did not confine their opposition to vulgarisations of Marxism; they could not accept Marxism itself. Eichenbaum's essay "5 = 100" leaves no doubt here. Three years earlier V. Shklovsky wrote in no less definite terms, "Art was always free of life and its colours never reflected the colours of the flag over the city fortress."³

How unexpected was Eichenbaum's statement some years later that "only cigarette paper" separates formalism from Marxism.⁴ Shklovsky wrote in the same spirit, "We are not Marxists, but if we need this utensil for our daily functions we won't deliberately eat with our hands."⁵

Metchenko calls this "shift" in formalism "the tactics of concession".⁶ It was advertised very loudly and to as wide an audience as possible. Things seemed simple as pie: since one could not confine oneself exclusively to the formal method in analysing the worth of a poetic work,

¹ B. Eichenbaum, "5=100", *Knizhny ugol*, No. 8, 1922, pp. 39, 41.

² *Moy vremennik*, p. 58.

³ *Iskusstvo kommuny*, No. 17, March 30, 1919.

⁴ Quoted from OI. Poltoratsky, "Cris formalnu metodu" (Crisis of the Formal Method), *Nova generatsiya*, 1927, p. 40.

⁵ V. Shklovsky, *Tretya fabrika* (The Third Factory), Moscow, 1926, p. 88.

⁶ A. Metchenko, *Vital Conquests*, p. 187.

one should "apply (!) a social analysis of a work". This, wrote one of the Ukrainian followers of the formal school, leads to a simple conclusion: "formalist and sociological critics should collaborate".¹ Another author noted that finally, "a true synthesis of the sociological and formal schools was occurring".² Thus the sociological steed and the formalist deer were harnessed to one cart. . . .

It was at this time that the unnatural formalist-sociological method was born. One can get some notion of this heterogeneous literary organism by reading *Sociological Poetics*, written by its leading theorist and propagandiser B. Arvatov, which, as Osip Brik wrote in the preface, was "to found the Lef programme from a Marxist perspective". Arvatov himself stated that the formal-sociological method "relies directly on Marxism".

In fact there was scant Marxism in *Sociological Poetics*. The basic principles of OPOYAZ poetics—the concept of "material", the rejection of "content", the neglect of "convictions", and "ideological principles" of the artist (referred to as "so-called" ideological principles), the view of art as "a system of devices in figuratively conceived genres"—were untouched; they were simply lavishly infused with "awfully sociological" terms and swathed in quasi-Marxist clothing. If the members of OPOYAZ cultivated "the making of the thing", the "forsoces" (as the advocates of the formal-sociological method were called at the time) in accordance with the Lef programme replaced it with the "means of production" of works, the "social production of mass literature". While the formalists viewed trans-rational language (*zaum*) as the highest purpose of art, proponents of the formal-sociological method affirmed that the "social role" of poetry was expressed in experimental neologisms.

Most importantly, the formalist postulates in sociological guise were miraculously combined by the "forsoces" with all sorts of crude vulgarisations. The essence and meaning of art was reduced to "utilitarian-propagandistic purpose of the literary product". The shift of poetic forms

¹ Gr. Maifet, "Materialy do kharakteristiki tvorchosti P. Tichini" (Material for a Description of the Works of P. Tychina), Kharkov, 1926, p. 4.

² Ol. Poltoratsky, "Crisis of the Formal Method", p. 44.

and plot devices was linked with socio-economic shifts, with the creating of a "staff of original, isolated artists manufacturers" who supplied the market with their works. Rhyme was seen as "an inevitable product of literary commodity economy",¹ and so on. One scholar of those years called it "throwing the driving-belt of production on the writer's neck".² This made the activity of the "forsoces" seem not only absurd, but even a bit sinister.

Some formalists hurried to dissociate themselves from the "forsoces". Eichenbaum said that they were taking the course of least resistance in their efforts to unite formalism and sociology and were not aware of "their comic role in the hands of History".³

But did not yesterday's members of OPOYAZ sin with the same eclecticism and effort to unite what could not be united? How different is the "professional-practical system of literary labour" advocated by the proponents of formal-sociological method from, say, the conception of "literary life"? One critic wrote, "Eichenbaum did the same thing that he once sarcastically reproached another literary historian for: he 'mixed in . . . a little sociology, a little aesthetics, a bit of biography, etc.' . . ."⁴ This is even more true of Shklovsky's work on *War and Peace*. On the one hand, the acute and categorical formulations any sociologist would envy, such as: "Tolstoy is a land-owner's writer," "*War and Peace* is propaganda for the aristocracy," etc. On the other hand, the closed literary series, the methods of OPOYAZ and the analytic devices of formal-stylistic structure are left unscathed.

The same duality is obvious in Shklovsky's essay on Lenin's style which opened a series on this theme in the magazine *Lef*. Attempting to comprehend such fundamentally new for him material as the works of Lenin,

¹ B. Arvatov, *Sotsiologicheskaya poetika* (Sociological Poetics), Moscow, 1928, pp. 8, 52, 49, 30, 31, 138, 48, 39, 40, 35.

² I quote the words of P. Sakulin from M. Grigoryev's *Literatura i ideologia*, p. 65.

³ B. Eichenbaum, "Vokrug voprosa o 'formalistakh'" (About the 'Formalist' Question), *Pechat i revolyutsia* (The Press and Revolution), Book 5, 1924, p. 2.

⁴ S. M. Breitburg, "Sdvig v formalizme" (The Shift in Formalism), *Literatura i marksizm*, Book 1, 1929, p. 45.

the scholar uses the same old devices as he used before. The name of the essay is characteristic: "Lenin, the Breaker of Canons". Shklovsky saw the main feature of Lenin's style as the surmounting of canons, the struggle with fixed formulas and stylistic stereotypes, the reduction of the revolutionary phrase. "Those who wish to understand Lenin's style," he writes, "should above all realise that it consists of a shift, rather than an establishment of something."¹ It is not difficult to recognise the traditional OPOYAZ principles of "automatisation" and "making strange" (*ostranenie*).

This is also characteristic of other materials in the above-mentioned series written by representatives of the "formal school". Throughout all the essays runs the leit-motif of Lenin's struggle with pseudo-revolutionary phraseology, interpreted, as Shklovsky did, from the perspective of the theory of the "automatisation" of the word and its "resurrection" through "shifts", and the "destruction of canons". A similar approach was taken by Eichenbaum (in his article "Basic Stylistic Tendencies in Lenin's Speech") where he compared Lenin's style with the futurists' experiments with neologisms, since, as he put it, in both cases we find the "destruction of the traditional 'poetic'".² B. Kazansky³ discussed the themes in one of Lenin's works by means of the formula: *abcc*², *bd*, *b*², *b*³, *bef*, *e-e e ef*, *ab¹ecd*. We note that Lenin's style is analysed primarily by applying the OPOYAZ set of tools.

These facts are important and one cannot help but regret that they frequently remain beyond the field of vision of scholars investigating the earliest pages of Lenin scholarship today. One exception is the work of Y. Elsberg "Problems and Tasks in the Study of Lenin's Literary Style", which treats certain positive observations made by *Let's* writers and also shows the fundamental methodological weaknesses of their studies. One cannot, for example, but agree with his criticism of Yakubinsky's "On Lenin's Lowering of High Style". Elsberg puts it this way: "The colourful and versatile nature of Lenin's style

¹ *Let*, No. 1 (5), 1924, p. 56.

² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

where 'lofty' words are combined with the terse language of science and popular speech, which confirm the power and reality of these words and the idea behind them—this most complex and integral mosaic of Lenin's style Yakubinsky calls 'lowering of high style' as a result of purely formalistic interpretation of brackets and fractions."¹

Apparently there is some justice in claiming that *Lef* materials also belong to the annals of history and philology, that in particular the works of Tynyanov and Eichenbaum contain many interesting and valuable individual observations. The very fact that the formalists turned to Lenin's legacy, however, was useful and marked a stage in their evolution as scholars. But this evolution was still only a promise. "Many years were needed before they re-examined their formalist conceptions,"² notes V. Pertsov, although he, in my opinion, somewhat exaggerates the scientific value of the aforementioned works on Lenin's style. In any case, the formalists retained their methodology here too.

Were they sincere in their efforts to approach Marxism? We have no reason to doubt this. But these efforts could not have positive results because they attempted to pour new wine into the old formalist jars. I am not speaking of the subjective intentions of representatives of the formalist school so much as the objective nature of that school and the socio-philosophical soil in which the formalist methodology is rooted.

Formalists loved to claim that they were not connected to any philosophical school. "But a devil-may-care attitude towards establishing one's parent is not proof of immaculate conception."³ The animation of formalist tendencies at the turn of the century was, as Lunacharsky wrote, a consequence of "the late maturity or early over-ripening of the bourgeoisie",⁴ when the sick bourgeois

¹ "Problemy i zadachi izucheniya literaturnogo stilya Lenina", *Transactions of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Literature and Language*. Vol. XXIX, issue 2, 1970, p. 132.

² V. Pertsov "Lenin-polemist" (Lenin the Polemiciser), *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, No. 22 (386), 1970.

³ Ivan Vinogradov, *Borba za stil* (Struggle for Style), Leningrad, 1937, p. 395.

⁴ A. V. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 416.

thought, tired of fruitless positivistic empiricism and getting flustered in the face of the contradictions of the epoch, rushed to idealism, "back to Kant". Zhirmunsky, noting Kant's aesthetic formula ("The beautiful is that which pleases without meaning") (*schön ist, was ohne Begriff gefällt*), justly states that "these words express the formalist teachings on art".¹ Indeed Kantian formal logic and transcendental aesthetics lay at the foundations of formalism; neo-Kantian elements intricately intertwined with the rootlets of positivism—allegedly being surmounted, but actually not surmounted at all. This was no synthesis, but a sort of "agnostic pluralism which is the outlook of an epoch and people deprived of creative work, confused, decentralised, but proudly proclaiming their shameful disease to be the most genuine health".²

The statement that formalist conceptions allegedly answered the spirit "of the slogans of the revolutionary maximum programme", that "the realities of the twenties created the conditions for the positive use of the works of the formalist school, their development, reinterpretation and natural entry into the broad context of scientific and creative quests",³ is without foundation. After the October Revolution, during a heightened class and ideological struggle in Russia, formalism was seen quite differently. "With NEP all the bourgeois intelligentsia took fresh heart,"⁴ and regardless of its position and the views of its representatives, formalism had to be viewed in this context. In the magazine *Pechat i revolyutsia* Lunacharsky wrote, "Before October formalism was simply a seasonal vegetable, today it is a living remnant of the old, a palladium around which the intellectuals who think in a bourgeois-European fashion organise their own defence, knowing that attack is the best defence. One cannot imagine an open struggle between Cadets and Communists, but it is perfectly permissible to witness an open struggle between formalism and Marxism. . . ."⁵

¹ V. Zhirmunsky, *The Theory of Literature*, p. 166.

² A. V. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 420.

³ L. Kozlov, "K probleme formy v sovetskoy estetike 20-kh godov" (On the Problem of Form in Soviet Aesthetics of the Twenties), *Voprosy estetiki*, Book 9, Moscow, 1971, pp. 143, 145.

⁴ I. Lezhnev, *Zapiski sovremennika* (Notes of a Contemporary), Vol. 1, *Istoki* (Sources), Moscow, 1936, p. 226.

⁵ A. V. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 415.

We should note that Lunacharsky called the intellectuals inclined toward formalism the intellectuals thinking in "a bourgeois-European fashion"—another essential feature of Russian formalism.

It would be an oversimplification to dismiss the latter as something entirely imported from abroad. There was indeed an exchange of ideas, in particular with European "descriptive" schools. But Russian formalism nevertheless arose and was formed on native soil in the specific ideological and philosophical atmosphere, and it is also a result of the conditions created by the imperialist war and the first post-October years; direct ties to European literary scholarship were extremely limited.

Nevertheless there was something alien in Russian formalism, not in line with the progressive tradition of Russian culture and scholarship. "Slavic-Russian culture was not my cup of tea," recalled Eichenbaum about his university years. "Even *The Lay of Igor's Host* did not move me at the time. . . . Without stepping outside, I entered Europe—in classroom No. 4. I entered the atmosphere of German romanticism, the lyrics of Provence, medieval French epics, Dante's *Divine Comedy*. My search was ended. . . ."¹ One way or the other, formalism was always perceived as an alien phenomenon.

When OPOYAZ's scalpel touched Russian folklore, fairy tales, songs and riddles (as well as Cervantes and Sterne), they lost their unique national face and were transformed into faceless, rootless, foundationless stereotypes. The methodology and nature of formalism contradicted the features of folk artistic thought and the traditions of progressive Russian culture which was so civic and patriotic from its very inception.

This is another area where formalism resembles structuralism. The latter has inherited the same deathly pallor of "Europeanism" (in Lunacharsky's application of this term) that was true of its predecessor. P. Palievsky rightly observes that structuralist analyses of folklore still scrupulously note repeating motifs and their combinations, but are not able to "understand why these motifs remain new and inexhaustible".² Indeed, how are we to understand

¹ B. Eichenbaum, *Moy vremennik*, p. 36.

² P. Palievsky, "Mera nauchnosti" (A Measure of Science), *Znaniya*, No. 4, 1966, p. 235.

it, if in their analysis folklore is a lifeless, wind-up toy rather than the artistic history of a people, the living expression of national character?

This is not a weakness or a slip of some individual author, but an organic quality of formalism as a movement. Wolfgang Kayser, a representative of the New Criticism, notes, "A work of verbal art lives as such and in itself. If this is so there is no further danger of likening literary scholarship and history; nor are we faced with the threat which rendered our thought so impotent during the last decades: that works of art would be pulled into the whirlpool of psychological, historical or national relativism."¹

Thus the separation of art from its national soil is one of the expressions of a general tendency to reject the idea that a work of art is determined by any social factors, or, in the end, by reality.

We have already mentioned the relation between formalist theory and the aesthetic heritage of Kant. Most obvious is the influence of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism and one of its most prominent representatives, Ernst Cassirer. In various widely used modifications of sign and symbolic theories of art, it is easy to trace conceptions expressed by Cassirer in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* and *An Essay on Man*. Above all he treats art in terms of symbolic forms which do not reflect reality, but immerses us in a unique and immanent (Kantian) world of "pure" forms.

The rejection of Hegel so characteristic of contemporary structuralism and the concurrent rejection of revolutionary-democratic and Marxist criticism which allegedly has not "cut the umbilical cord from Hegelian aesthetics", also go back to Cassirer's ideas, his decided preference for intuitivism over rationalism, for spirit over cognition. The line of "content" is contrasted with the "formal" line, which begins with Kant, continues with Johann Herbart (who wanted to free aesthetics from philosophy and make it independent), then with the works of O. Gostinsky's early period and the Russian "formal school" and Prague Linguistic Circle, evolving into structuralism. Many Czech philosophers, including J. Zmr and K. Chvatik, work in

¹ Wolfgang Kayser, *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk. Eine Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft*, Bern, 1948, S. 388.

this tradition. Some authors of the collection *The Structure and Meaning of a Literary Work* (Prague, 1966) see structuralism's main contribution in its rejection of Hegelian aesthetic thought concerned with content which, they believe, makes the truth absolute and aesthete. Such concepts as truth, good, and reality "are impoverished, their festive attire is taken away".

By its nature structuralism is an eclectic philosophy; the influence of Kant and the rejection of rationalism are combined in it with a strong tendency toward logical positivism. This attracts the structuralists because of its extreme absolutisation of formal language and its logical structure.

Interestingly enough members of the Vienna Circle (founded in 1923 and including among others M. Schlick, R. Carnap, and O. Neurath) noted in the manifesto "The Scientific View of the World" that one of the primary sources of their neo positivism was the mathematical logic of Leibnitz. Indeed one of the main leitmotifs in his thought was the effort to create one, all-embracing system, a "universal characteristic" (*characteristica universalis*) based on simple concepts organised in "an alphabet of thought". He believed that all thought could be mathematicised, reduced to symbols, and wrote in *New Experiments in Human Reason*: "If someone wanted to write in a mathematical style on metaphysics or morality, nothing would prevent him from doing so with complete stringency."¹ This gave rise to the idea of inventing a worldwide written language (pasigraphy) designed to exclude natural language from scientific use. With regard to Leibnitz's idea, one biographer interprets it in this way: "There can be a universal written language if all the sciences follow the lead of mathematics and characters for the precise designation of phenomena can be found and applied as the signs of arithmetic and algebra are to designate quantities and their relations. Then it will be just as feasible to express, record and prove all scientific truths with the same rigorousness as we do mathematical truths."²

¹ G. W. Leibniz, *Neue Abhandlungen über den menschlichen Verstand*, Leipzig, 1915, S. 280.

² Kuno Fischer, *History of the New Philosophy*, Vol. III. *Leibnitz: His Life, Works and Teachings*, St. Petersburg, 1905, p. 15;

At times Leibnitz's pasigraphy is examined as the precursor of esperanto and other artificial languages; but it has a wider significance. Here the philosopher was seeking a universal, logical and mathematical model based on the principle of conventionality. We readily find echoes of this idea in contemporary science. Norbert Wiener noted that "Leibnitz's computing machines were only an offshoot of his interest in computing language, a reasoning calculus which again was in his mind merely an extension of his idea of a complete artificial language...". He writes, "My views in this book are very far from being Leibnitzian, but the problems with which I am concerned are most certainly Leibnitzian..." He continues, "...Leibnitz's preoccupations were mostly linguistic and communicational."¹

For members, and later followers, of the Vienna Circle, language as a sum of logical, symbolic means of description, an ordered, internally consistent sign system fulfilling exclusively formal conditions of truth, became (also, in the final analysis, in the spirit of Leibnitz) a universal model. Instead of real facts and phenomena they studied their signs—words and sentences, and logical and linguistic relations between them. R. Carnap, for example, claims that in order to escape subjectivistic chaos and create a genuinely scientific philosophy, one must above all stand "on the firm ground of purely syntactic problems".² Convinced that any references to the relation between thought and real things lead to confusion, Carnap proposes that philosophy should be confined to the logical analysis of language. He has in mind the creation of special linguistic semantic systems where each concept, unlike conversational language, has only one meaning.

This movement of modern bourgeois philosophy had a decisive influence on linguistics (primarily in Hjelmslev's glossematics, also called Danish, or Copenhagen structuralism) and through linguistics, on literary scholar-

See also L. Lopatin, "Leibnitz", *F. A. Brokgaus and I. A. Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, Vol. XVIIa, St. Petersburg, 1896, p. 482 (all in Russian).

¹ Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*, New York, 1956, p. 19.

² Rudolf Carnap, *Logische Syntax der Sprache*, Wien, 1934, S. 261.

ship; it was a strong stimulus for the development of structuralist tendencies in the latter. Such principal concepts as "autonomy of the object", "immanence of the system", and the "pure" relations, and "metalanguage" are derived from neo-positivist postulates.

Also related are the various modifications of so called semantism, the works of semiotician Ch. Morris who, basing himself on the works of American logician Ch. Pierce, and on the pragmatic aesthetics of John Dewey and G. H. Mead, attempted to mark the path of the study of art as a sign system. The semiotic analysis of art is a special theme; I only want to note that one can find elements of this sort in the works of ancient and later authors. In itself the semiotic approach is lawful and may even be fruitful when the investigator has a clear awareness of his goals and limitations. The latter is the Achilles' heel of bourgeois conceptions. They view the semiotic approach, not as one possible aspect of the study of art, not as a subsidiary method, but as the "essence" of aesthetics. This is doubtless due to the influence of positivist ideas; it is no accident that Charles Morris writes, "Indeed it does not seem fantastic to believe that the concept of sign may prove as fundamental to the sciences of man as the concept of atom has been for the physical sciences. . . ."¹

We see that the opponents of the structuralists, like Sartre, have good foundations for their views that it is a "return to positivism".² This peculiar process reflects both the increasing crisis of the capitalist system and, to a certain extent, its stabilisation due to the contemporary scientific and technological revolution. The processes taking place in science and technology today are unparalleled in size and intensity; these seize the imagination and inevitably give rise to technocratic illusions among some and a sense of oppression and impasse among others. Among the sources of painful contradictions in the bourgeois consciousness are the gigantic flood of information, the increasing power of the mass media, which on

¹ Ch. W. Morris, "Foundations of the Theory of Signs", *International Encyclopedia of Unified Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Chicago, 1938, p. 42.

² See *L'Arc*, No. 30, 1966, p. 94.

the one hand makes one "aware of the independent significance... of communications between people",¹ and on the other weakens communicability in capitalist society; and the burgeoning system of social and federal institutions (the Establishment) which are being transformed into an almost mystic, transcendental alienating force. Here too are a profound dissatisfaction with the world, a subconscious fear of reality, real experience, and at the same time a blind hope that such experience is the only force that may be able to surmount the chaos and retain an equilibrium.

Thus "live thought capitulates to abstract logic and the alienated, technical, dead side of contemporary civilisation";² this also motivates the characteristic bourgeois faith (or perhaps more accurately *desire* to have faith) in numbers, statistics, computerised, formalised truth that replaces former lofty ideals with the promise of less lofty, but real wordly values.

"Thus all human deeds will be calculated . . . mathematically, like tables of logarithms, to 108,000 and recorded in the calendar; or even better, certain loyal publications similar to today's encyclopaedic lexicons will appear, containing all the calculations, and will insure that there will be neither deeds nor adventure in the world from that time on,"³ wrote Dostoevsky in an attempt to refute the socialist utopias, which he did not understand. In fact he was describing the typical bourgeois consciousness with an astute vision of the further development of the proprietary spirit.

As if to extend this description, a contemporary writer⁴ tells with bitter irony a fable of our times about a simpleton who is thoughtlessly enraptured with the almighty number. This fellow hears from a mathematician friend that according to the theory of probability, if one sets six chimpanzees at typewriters and forces them to press the

¹ Abraham Moles, *Théories de l'information et perception esthétique*, p. 13.

² P. Palievsky, "O strukturalisme v literaturovedenii" (Structuralism and Literary Scholarship), *Znamya*, No. 12, 1963, p. 198.

³ F. M. Dostoevsky, *Collected Works* in ten volumes, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1956, p. 152 (in Russian).

⁴ See Mortimer Taube, *Computers and Common Sense: The Myth of Thinking Machines*, New York and London, 1961.

keys at random, in time they will reproduce all the books in the British Museum library. He decides to help the advancement of science, purchasing some chimpanzees and setting them to work. Soon they have tapped out *Oliver Twist*, a poem by John Donne, works by Anatole France, Conan Doyle, Proust, plays by Somerset Maugham, the memoirs of Maria of Rumania, and so on. The experiment ends tragically: the mathematician, astounded that his prognosis has proved accurate, loses his reason, shoots the chimpanzees and himself is killed by his fanatical friend. The last chimpanzee sadly gazes at Montaigne's *Essais*, which he has just finished typing, as he bleeds to death. . . .

This fantastic story is typical of the socio psychological soil on which the ancient tree of philosophical positivism bloomed and fostered an offshoot—structuralism.

Structuralists have curious pretensions about being revolutionary. Formalist theoreticians made transparent hints that formalism reflected revolutionary changes in Russia; this thesis, as we have seen, is still taken up even in our time. Neo formalistic schools today present themselves as men who shake foundations and explore new paths. The Italian "avant-garde" group (Group 63) call themselves "leftist" writers and declare that they are dedicated to revolution and even sympathetic to Marxism. In perhaps a more radical spirit the French group *Tel Quel* claims to study the processes of revolution and counter-revolution through the prism of the structure of poetic speech, *l'écriture*, its political, ideological and even economic functions.

The views of Herbert Marcuse also deserve our attention in this respect. Marcuse tries to relate formalism in art with anarchistic rebellion, the ideals of "The Great Refusal", "permanent challenge", "...an historical break with the past and the present". Rebelliousness is, for Marcuse, inherent in artistic creativity ("Form by virtue of which art transcends the given reality, works in the established reality against the established reality;..."), but is most clearly expressed in the extremes of anti art whose goal is to break with the world of the known. Comparing exponents of "black" music (Marcuse implies here any form of the avant-garde, including "its avant-gardistic white development") with the hero of Mann's

Doctor Faustus, who dreams of abolishing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the author of *An Essay on Liberation* sees here a direct reflection of "the political rebellion against the 'affluent society' ". True, Marcuse confesses that the latter is not all that wary of such distortions, in fact rebellious art is not only easy to swallow, it is shaped by the market. Still he has great hopes for this art, which he views as "... an essential element of radical politics: of the subverting forces in transition".¹

At times we seem to be influenced by such declarations. Sometimes things are stated in such a way as to demonstrate that structuralist schools and formalist movements play the part of revolutionary forces obliged to "break through a wall of official propaganda, philistine complacency and conformity".²

In fact the apparent anti-bourgeois qualities of formalists and their non-conformism are only the result of an aberration of social vision. The practice of neo-formalism in art and the theory of structuralism are related, although not directly, with theories of the so called "industrial" and "postindustrial" society.

From this point of view the polemic waged by Italian critic Romano Luperini against structuralists' pretensions to autonomy is of interest. He notes in his essay "Marxist Criticism and Structuralist Criticism" (*Casa de las Américas*, No. 44, 1967) that such autonomy, even theoretical autonomy, is only possible within certain limits; even the scholar who confines his research to the most narrow, specialised questions and uses special methods of research experiences some form or other of external influence. Proponents of structuralist criticism who credit it with both "pure value" and "prophetic vision"—ethical political quality—also acknowledge this. But there is more to it. In developed, industrial capitalist societies critical "autonomy" ceases to be an illusion; it becomes an ideological hoax which, according to Luperini, "the ruling classes

¹ Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, London, 1969, pp. IX, VIII, 40, 47, 48.

² E. P. Yurovskaya, "Problemy khudozhestvennoy kritiki v sovremennoy frantsuzskoy burzhuaznoy estetike" (Art Criticism in Contemporary French Bourgeois Art Criticism), *Filosofskie nauki*, No. 4, 1967, p. 88.

apply to guarantee the effective subordination of ideology to the laws of production". In fact, we should speak of a sort of division of labour with the goal of rationalisation, of achieving greater efficiency both within the given unit of social production and, in the final analysis, within the entire system. This, in Luperini's opinion, allows us to demonstrate that the structuralist "criticism of historicism and Marxism will become part of the new ideology of the capitalist system itself".

From the Italian neo-avant-garde we see that the "revolutionary spirit" of contemporary formalism can be reduced to ultra-left phrases or petty bourgeois political extremism.

These are only sharp paradoxes, the twists and turns of development. Structuralism is basically loyal, not to the revolution and the thirst for destruction, but to stability and conformism, which most correspond to its nature. It is noteworthy that many writers link the decline of interest in structuralism in France with the events of May and June 1968, when the social contradictions of society were revealed with unprecedented acuteness and the futility of any forms of status quo became evident. There is no basis for speaking of a catastrophe, or even of a defeat. Structuralism may have staggered, but it remained on its feet; it is pragmatic and extremely businesslike for good reasons.

This, however, does not prevent it from having a vein of idealism. There is a direct relation between the structuralist concept of a work of art as a system of abstract relations and the logical construction of the positivists, the "empirically known relation of 'neighbourhood' ".¹ For Rudolf Carnap, "to accept the thing world means nothing more than to accept a certain form of language, in other words, to accept rules for forming statements and for testing, or rejecting them".² The rules according to which linguistic structures are created are conventions, that is,

¹ Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, New York, 1948, p. 256.

² Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology". In *Challenge to Empiricism*. Ed. by Harold Morick. Belmont, California, 1972, p. 31.

they depend entirely on the will of the subject. L. Hjelmslev, who wished to transfer the ideas of logical positivism to the sphere of the study of language, also believes that linguistics should free itself of the "postulation of objects as something different from the terms of relationships", since "a totality does not consist of things, but of relationships and . . . not substance but only its internal and external relationships have scientific existence. . .".¹ Another Copenhagen structuralist gives an even clearer formulation of this view: "To the scientific view the world does not consist of things, or even of 'matter', but only of functions between things, the things themselves being regarded merely as points in which functions meet. 'Matter' as such is completely ignored, so that the scientific conception of the world is a diagram rather than a picture."²

Thus we are speaking of structures devoid of any objective material foundation; the real world is interpreted as a sum of relations in which the meaning, the "fullness" of component parts is not essential.

We must confess that from here it's just a hop, skip and a jump to physical idealism.

One of the primary sources of logical positivism was the conventionalism of H. Poincaré. Max Born describes the philosophical views of this distinguished French mathematician and physicist in the following way: "According to this view all human concepts are free inventions of the mind and conventions between different minds, justifiable only by their usefulness on ordinary experience."³ Henri Poincaré is one of the authors with whom Lenin polemicised in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, analysing the reasons for the contemporary crisis in physics. Since the interpretation of scientific laws as pure symbols, conventions, "free inventions" and "agreements" presumed, in essence, an ignorance of objective reality and led to the acknowledgement of "the disappearance of matter", Lenin was able to reproach Poincaré for yielding to idealism and fideism.

¹ Louis Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, Madison, 1963, p. 23.

² H. J. Uldall, *Outline of Glossematics*, Copenhagen, 1957, p. 8.

³ Max Born, *Physics in My Generation*, London and New York, 1956, p. 105.

Even today conventionalist ideas are disseminated to some degree among Western physicists. "Physics is moving to drive dead matter from the world picture," writes Austrian physicist Arthur March, "and replace it with the living play of forms." The concept of structure is treated idealistically and used to prove the "disappearance of matter", "the non-materiality" of particles; physical laws are viewed as "pure statements" about structure.

March is inclined to view this as testimony to the destruction of "the materialistic way of thinking". Of course he is indulging in wishful thinking; but what he is right about is that such a treatment of structure "cannot be reconciled with the spirit of materialism".¹ Nor can it be reconciled with Marxism. Structuralists and their proponents love to point out that Marx also used the term "structure". But this does not prove anything in and of itself. We are not dealing with terms, but with their true meaning.

For Marxism the concept of structure has a profoundly materialistic meaning. Whether we speak of the purely spatial aspect of structure (as, for example, in crystallography), a certain consistent order of atomic bonds in the molecule of chemical compounds, the structure of processes in a living organism or the mathematical set, all these structures reflect structure as found in our real environment. The concept of structure is a necessary abstraction in the process of cognition; yet it still reflects objectively existing relations of elements. When Marx examines the totality of production relations in society as its "economic structure" he is not referring to some half mystical "pure" relations, but to very real economic relations between parts of a no less real and objectively existing whole—the social organism. Despite the opinion of the authors of *Lire le Capital*, Marx studies the structure of capitalist society, not as an abstraction, but as the structure of a given historical formation. Structuralism, as we have seen, views structure differently. This is not due to nuances of their approach, but to essential differences rooted in the ideological-philosophical, social nature of both conceptions.

¹ Arthur March, *Das neue Denken der modernen Physik*, Hamburg, 1957, S. 121, 122.

Returning to the dispute between structuralists and existentialists we should mention that there is, of course, no question of backing either side. Despite the attempts of Sartre to lend Marxist colouring to existentialism, it is profoundly alien to Marxism. Similarly the fierce attacks made by structuralists on existentialist subjectivism hardly speak for the materialist nature of structuralism. In this case the "rule of contraries" certainly does not apply.

At the same time we should not exaggerate the scale and acuteness of these mutual attacks where each participant acts both as refuter and refuted. Each is right in certain points; each has his limits. Above all we must realise that structuralism is not monolithic; it has many complex, transitional elements. For example, some of the followers of Lévi-Strauss go much farther than their *maître*, and their views do not entirely fit into the framework of his philosophical doctrine. This is particularly true of his Rousseauist motifs (the idealisation of primitive societies, criticism of modern civilisation, contrast between "nature" and "culture") which seem somehow dissonant in respect to the positivist spirit of orthodox structuralism. On the other hand, P. Zarev (Bulgaria) states that there is an "ideological and philosophical closeness" between structuralism and existentialism. Comparing the views of Heidegger, Jaspers, Camus with the propositions in J. Auzias' book *Le clef pour le structuralisme*, the scholar observes that both schools of bourgeois thought are characterised by "their negation of the role and meaning of social phenomena", "their tendency to be closed".¹

These questions require special discussion. At the time we would like to stress another point. In the polemic with structuralism, the existentialists, above all Sartre, point out its vulnerable places with a fair amount of precision and make some valuable observations on its nature. Sartre has some foundation when he connects the structuralists' anti-historicism with the Western thesis that "philosophy is dead", and sees the roots of both these phenomena in the "technocratic revolution" which "leaves no room for

¹ Pantelei Zarev, *Structuralism, Literary Scholarship and the Aesthetic Ideal*, pp. 22-24.

philosophy if it is not transformed into technology as well".

Let us repeat that existentialism remains existentialism and it is not changed by the fact that it opposes structuralism. But when Sartre says that the creation of a "new ideology is the last obstacle that the bourgeoisie can raise against Marx", when he reproaches Michel Foucault for "dispensing with history meaning to strike Marxism",¹ we should listen to him no matter where his loyalties lie.

We should also not lose sight of another fact. The essential, acute philosophical, ideological and methodological watersheds between Marxism and structuralism do not entail the total abandonment of the structural *method*. Lévi Strauss, for example, does not claim to have invented a special philosophical system. "Structuralism," he notes, "is not a philosophical doctrine, but a method."² In any case it would be foolish to throw out the baby with the bath water and deny any possibility for applying structural methods, devices and achievements in the humanities.

This is particularly true of those social disciplines which are characterised by a comparatively high degree of discreteness—say, economics, history, or ethnology. From this perspective the works of Lévi Strauss, for example, are very definitely of interest, above all his major work *Mythologiques*, which contains a model structural analysis of hundreds of American Indian myths. With respect to literary and art criticism such interesting works include Propp's *Morphology of the Fairy Tale*, Pyotr Bogatyrev's *Magical Actions, Rites and Beliefs of Zakarpatye* and *Czech and Slovak Folk Theatre*, Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky. In a class of their own are Eisenstein's *The Fourth Dimension in Cinema*, *Montage 1938*, *Vertical Montage*, and *On the Structure of Things* which in many respects use structuralist methods. To cast doubt on the scientific import of such studies (even if one can take exception to certain positions taken by their authors) would be to sin against the truth.

Many contemporary works also confirm the viability and even productivity of structural devices as well as the application of statistical-probability analysis to certain

¹ *L'Arc*, No. 30, 1966, p. 88.

² *Le nouvel observateur*, No. 115, 1967, p. 32.

areas in art. I might cite the mathematic studies of the Academician A. N. Kolmogorov dealing with prosody.¹ His concept of "the entropy of speech" is quite interesting; Kolmogorov defines this as "an index of ramifications of the possibilities for continuing speech with a given vocabulary and rules for constructing phrases".² Traditional and somewhat nebulous judgments on the "plasticity" or "richness" of speech in a given work may, it seems, be verified by experiments, by objective criteria.

Interesting and possibly productive structuralist ideas include the principle of oppositions, suggested to the structuralists by phonology. Vyacheslav Vsev. Ivanov and V. N. Toporov attracted attention with their concrete (not methodological) observations on a system of oppositions characterising a medieval Slavic "model of the world".³ The principle of oppositions also figures prominently in Lotman's *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, as a sort of key to the holy of holies—the internal organisation of an artistic text—and the subtleties of a complex system of comparisons and contrasts which intersect and interact.

¹ See A. N. Kolmogorov, A. M. Kondratov, "Ritmika poem Mayakovskogo" (The Rhythm of Mayakovsky's Poems), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 3, 1962; A. N. Kolmogorov, "K izucheniyu ritmiki Mayakovskogo" (Towards a Study of Mayakovsky's Rhythm), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 4, 1963; A. N. Kolmogorov, A. V. Prokhorov, "O dolnike sovremennoy russkoy poezii (Obshchaya kharakteristika)" (The Modern Russian Dolnik. A General Description), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 6, 1963; A. N. Kolmogorov, A. V. Prokhorov, "O dolnike sovremennoy russkoy poezii. (Statisticheskaya kharakteristika dolnika Mayakovskogo, Bagritskogo, Akhmatovoy)" (The Modern Russian Dolnik. A Statistical Description of Mayakovsky's, Bagritsky's and Akhmatova's Use of the Dolnik), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 1, 1964; A. N. Kolmogorov, "Zamechaniya po povodu analiza ritma 'Stikhov o sovetskom pasporte' Mayakovskogo" (An analysis of the Rhythm in Mayakovsky's 'Verses About a Soviet Passport'), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 3, 1965.

² A. N. Kolmogorov, "Tri podkhoda k opredeleniyu ponyatiya 'kolichestvo informatsii'" (Three Approaches to the Determination of 'the Quantity of Information') *Problemy peredachi informatsii* (The Transfer of Information), Moscow, No. 1, issue 1, 1965, p. 4.

³ See Vyach. Vsev. Ivanov, V. N. Toporov, *Slavyanskiye yazykovye modeliruyushchiye semioticheskiye sistemy. (Drevniy period)* (Slavic Linguistic Modeling Semiotic Systems: Ancient Period), Moscow, 1965.

In many cases Lotman uses this "key" with sufficient skill. In his analysis of a poem by Lermontov he succeeds in showing the relation between the poem's structure and phonological elements, revealing the semantic differentiating role of repetition. Also interesting are his observations on regular features of the syntagmatic construction of an artistic text. Noting that Lomonosov first called "the conjunction of disparate ideas" an essential rhetorical device, Lotman speaks of "combining the incombining", the converging of different things as a sort of impetus and source of energy in an artistic structure (this apparently includes Pushkin's "strange affinities" and Eisenstein's montage). A poetic construction will present "a special world of semantic juxtapositions, analogies, contrasts and oppositions which does not coincide with the semantic network of natural language, but enters into conflict with it and struggles".¹ No doubt such an approach to the artistic construction can have some positive results.

But we should note that structural poetics has a tendency to make the principle of oppositions into something absolute, to exaggerate its importance, which can be felt in *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Lotman tends to evaluate binary oppositions (such as poor and rich, one's own and alien, faithful and heretic, friends and enemies, "natural" beings and "social" beings, etc.) as a general principle which operates throughout a work on all of its levels and in its complex constructive features. This sort of universal application of the principle of opposition is fraught with the danger of schematism. Certain examples from Lotman's book demonstrate that our misgivings in this respect are not without foundation.

I, for one, am not convinced that this principle helps us to deal with character. Lotman proposes that we divide the work (here a dramatic one) into synchronic segments; each of these "in a special way divides the characters into two camps"; then one superimposes these binary divisions; the resulting "bundles of differentiation" should represent the characters. Thus for Lotman character is "the set of all given binary oppositions in the text between the

¹ Y. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, p. 237.

given character and other characters (other groups)".¹ The only virtue of such a conception is, perhaps, that it corresponds entirely to the immanent approach to a work, to the view of it as a closed structure. But is this, after all, a virtue?

Our theory of literature once had to deal with a similar phenomenon and to overcome it. We recall the works of the representatives of the "formal school" where the literary hero was merely "the living carrier of given motifs". Tomashevsky wrote, "A character is the main thread that allows us to make sense of the pile of motifs, a secondary means for the classification and ordering of individual motifs."² I must confess that I can't see how a character viewed as "a secondary means" (or, if you like, "a device for the grouping and superimposition of motifs") differs from one viewed as "a set . . . of binary oppositions".

Another example illustrating the dangers of the principle of oppositions is Lotman's analysis of four lines from Tsvetaeva's poem "The Cave" (in the cycle *Verses for an Orphan*). Striving to interpret the content within the limits of the opposition: I-You, Lotman divides all the words in the poem into pairs; he comes out with fifteen pairs of words arranged in order of increasing phonological congruence. After such an operation the work is decomposed, the integrality of its structure lost, and, as L. Timofeev notes, we are "no longer dealing with a text by Tsvetaeva, but with an extremely distant text by Y. Lotman".³

The same thing occurs with Zabolotsky's verse, examined exclusively in terms of the modeling role of the opposition "top-bottom". Once again a series of variant oppositions are constructed; through these a fundamental top-bottom axis is realised, including the oppositions distant-close, spacious-cramped, movement-immobility, and so on.

*Alive I wandered o'er the fields,
And entered forests without fear;
Like transparent pillars, the thoughts of dead men
Ascended all around me to the heavens. . . .*

¹ Y. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, pp. 303-04.

² B. Tomashevsky, *Literary Theory, Poetics*, p. 152.

³ *Novy mir*, No. 5, 1971, p. 241.

Lotman believes that the italicised words allow us to assume that "thought inevitably is expressed in Zabolotsky's lyrics as a vertical ascension of freed nature. . .".¹ The all-embracing opposition "top-bottom" triumphs, but a despondent, lifeless, excessively literal treatment of the poetic imagery triumphs with it. The hidden reason is that despite the author's reservations, the principle of opposition is only an element of the formalised language of a work, and its relation to content is illusory. One of the reviewers of *Lectures on Structural Poetics*, B. Maryev, also noted this. In his opinion Lotman "frequently seeks . . . oppositions only inside the textual structure, which leads him to ignore the artistic context". This is also true of the purely formal division of all artistic phenomena into two categories—"the aesthetics of identity" and "the aesthetics of contrast" (this division is also treated in *The Structure of the Artistic Text*): "investigation of the content . . . would have immediately destroyed the strictness of the proposed scheme".²

The aforementioned examples with respect to the principle of opposition have demonstrated one of the essential weaknesses of the structuralist school: it still cannot prove the practical use of its poetics. Attempts at applying its postulates to artistic phenomena are, as a rule, forced and far-fetched. This is also true of models regarded as the most perfect, including Jakobson's and Lévi-Strauss' analysis of Baudelaire's poem "Les Chats" (*L'Homme*, January-April 1962). In their notes to the Russian translation of this poem, N. Balashov and I. Postupalsky convincingly demonstrate the "distance between the desired and achieved results in the structural analysis of poetry".³ In any case, a systematic, successful application of structural methods in literary scholarship is more a distant possibility than a fact.

¹ Y. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, p. 274.

² B. M. Maryev, "Gorizonty dialektiki i shory lingvostilistiki" (The Horizons of Dialectics and the Blindness of Linguostylistics), in *Estetiku-v zhizn* (Aesthetics in Life), Book 2. *Uchenye zapiski Uralskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. A. M. Gorkogo*, No. 68, Philosophical series, issue 1, Sverdlovsk, 1967, pp. 118-20.

³ Charles Baudelaire *Tsvety zla* (Flowers of Evil), Moscow, 1970, pp. 367-69.

Lotman is also unable to surmount this barrier. Most of his text devoted to concrete analysis is only an illustration to theoretical propositions. Despite the occasional insights it is difficult to refrain from thinking that his original observations are by no means always convincing or applicable, and anything that has real interest is, apart from the terminology, still in the realm of traditional poetics.

The terminology should be treated separately. The renovation of the terminological arsenal is a natural, necessary process and should not frighten us or put us on guard. But it is hardly necessary to state that in itself such innovations do not guarantee progress. New terms are only justified when they are necessary to widen the framework of concepts that, in the words of Niels Bohr, has not only served to "restore order within the respective branches of knowledge, but has also disclosed analogies ... in apparently separated domains of knowledge..."¹

Does this new terminology which has saturated (if not oversaturated) the works of representatives of the structuralist school meet this requirement?

This has not yet been proved. I, for one, am not at all convinced that such terms as "information", "noise in the channel of communication", "code", "recoding", and "invariant" will "serve to restore order" in literary scholarship. One of the reviewers of B. Uspensky's *The Poetics of Composition* observed, "One does not sense an organic fusion of terminology and description; new definitions as a rule do not seem indispensable in the presentation which is based on traditional literary concepts." This dualism of terminology is seen by the reviewer as evidence of methodological duality and uncertainty. He admits that there are many convincing observations on the theme in the book, but does not see anything "specifically semiotic" in them. Describing and classifying compositional variants Uspensky in essence "performs the same sort of investigation that was performed more than once by his predecessors in the same way".²

¹ Niels Bohr, *Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge*, New York, 1958, p. 68.

² Gurovich, "Zamysel i smysl issledovaniya" (The Scheme of a Literary Work and Meaning of Research), *Voprosy literatury*, No. 2, 1971, pp. 200, 199.

It seems that we are dealing with a fairly typical phenomenon for literature on structural poetics.

There are other curious things as well. The new terms were introduced, it would seem, to facilitate precision in the criteria of literary scholarship. What in fact do they do?

Let us recall Lotman's analysis of Zabolotsky's poetry. It is approximate and arbitrary, but wrapped in the most modern terminology. . . . One must also confess that many terms widely used by the author and his colleagues and regarded as "precise" turn out to be diffuse and could give rise to extremely varying interpretations. And wasn't it Lotman who wrote that such concepts should not be regarded as terms. . . .¹ Apparently the problem of precision in literary scholarship is not as simple as it sometimes seems, and it is still unclear whether structural poetics actually reveals new perspectives in this regard.

Another conclusion, however, is quite clear: even the most successful experiments in the application of structural analysis, and the methods of semiotics, mathematics and statistical-probability methods are related to *individual* aspects of artistic creation, those aspects where a large part is played by recurring, calculable elements. Either these are attempts to apply the theory of probability to prosody where the artistic effect frequently depends on various forms repeated, or statistical-probability analysis of separate components of a writer's language (the dimension of a sentence, changes in the frequency of use of parts of speech, etc.).² Or these are investigations of folklore models whose forms as a result of the artistic thought of our distant ancestors and in part due to tempo-

¹ Y. Lotman, "O razgranichenii lingvisticheskogo i literaturovedcheskogo ponyatiya struktury" (On Delimitation of the Linguistic and Literary Concepts of Structure), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 3, 1963, p. 47.

² See, for example, G. A. Lesskis, "O razmerakh predlozhenii v russkoy nauchnoy i khudozhestvennoy proze 60-kh godov XIX v." (The Length of Sentences in Russian Scholarly Writing and Fiction of the 1860s), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 2, 1962; G. A. Lesskis, "O zavisimosti mezhdru razmerom predlozheniya i kharakterom teksta" (The Dependence of the Length of Sentences on the Nature of a Text), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 3, 1963; B. N. Golovin,

ral considerations (time, as A. Veselovsky observes, being "the great simplifier"¹) are somewhat static.

The structuralists themselves admit this. "Semiotic analysis can for the time being only be applied to the simplest forms and aspects of artistic works," writes I. Revzin in his essay "The Goals of Structural Studies of Art". "When we speak of analysing finished things, structural methods are capable of studying comparatively simple, mass phenomena like *chastushkas*, riddles, *bylinas*, fairy tales and myths."²

I have no desire to cast doubt on such studies; in the end any reasonable investigations of this sort can prove useful although, as V. Pertsov noted, "If you chase a rabbit, it doesn't guarantee you'll end up with ragout."³ People have attempted to apply semiotic methods to the work of Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy. But the best of these attempts confine themselves to more or less narrow, specialised aspects. The worst of them (and these do occur) are simply unforgiveable vulgarisations. By way of example we can point to the notion that a work of art is "an invention", performing "some concrete technical function", and "the demonstration of its generation from certain themes and materials according to certain rules" is its structural description.⁴ Also belonging to this category are theories proposed "in dead earnest" that a device with 10²⁰ states could have written *Eugene Onegin*.⁵ One book published several years ago informed the young reader that one could devise a self-programming machine which, if one merely (merely!—Y.B.) formulated the proper commands, would "create a work of art" all by itself. The

"Opyt veroyatnostno-statisticheskogo izucheniya nekotorykh yavlenii istorii russkogo literaturnogo yazyka XIX XX vv." (An Experiment in Statistical-Probability Studies of the Russian Literary Language of the 19th and 20th Centuries), *Voprosy yazykoznavaniya*, No. 3, 1965.

¹ A. N. Veselovsky, "Poetika" (Poetics), *Selected Works*, St. Petersburg, 1913, Vol. 2, issue 1, p. 2.

² *Voprosy literatury*, No. 6, 1965, p. 81.

³ *Novy mir*, No. 4, 1971, p. 208.

⁴ A. Zholkovsky, Y. Shcheglov, "Structural Poetics as Generative Poetics", *Voprosy literatury*, No. 1, 1967, p. 82.

⁵ See *Structural-Typological Studies*, p. 292; and also L. O. Reznikov, *Gnoseologicheskiye voprosy semiotiki* (The Epistemology of Semiotics), Leningrad, 1964, p. 32.

author, with disarming acumen, argues the virtues of the machine as opposed to an artist: "How many marvellous works perish for want of time and other 'human reasons'! ... But a self-programming machine would be able to work around the clock, a million times faster than the human brain."¹

Such views are sharply criticised by some proponents of structuralism. Lotman rejects the possibility of creating a generative model of *Eugene Onegin*. Vyacheslav Vsev. Ivanov calls Zholkovsky's and Shcheglov's works "half-parodical" and stresses that they are "still far" from serious literary scholarship.² That is true, but the important thing is not only to dissociate oneself from such extremes, but also to understand on what soil they may arise. Are we not really speaking of an exaggerated notion of the applicability of structural methods in the humanities in general, and art studies in particular? This sort of exaggeration is *typical* for structuralism. Yuri Lotman, for example, frankly poses the question of the creation of "a new methodology for the humanities".³ He believes that structuralism is that sort of a *universal* method.

True, he concludes *The Structure of the Artistic Text* with the statement that "any structural description inevitably leads to a loss of the text's sematic wealth".⁴ This is an important confession and it is doubly valuable because one so rarely hears such confessions. But on the whole our structuralist school tends to claim particulars as universals. Certain methods of analysis, ideas not unproductive in themselves, but purely of heuristic significance, are treated as all-embracing rules, as an absolute norm. If the analysis is synchronic—then it is *only* synchronic to the detriment of history. If it deals with objective structures, then it deals *exclusively* with structures and man no longer counts. If it is related to linguistics, then linguistics is proclaimed the science of sciences. If it

¹ A. M. Kondratov, *Chislo i mysl* (Numbers and Thought), Moscow, 1963, p. 108.

² Vyach. Vsev. Ivanov, "O primenenii tochnykh metodov v literaturovedenii" (On the Use of Precise Methods in Literary Scholarship), *Voprosy literatury*, No. 10, 1967, p. 126.

³ Y. Lotman, *Lectures on Structural Poetics*, p. 12.

⁴ Y. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, p. 365.

concentrates on the principle of opposition, then all things are *reduced* to oppositions, and so on and so forth.

To be brief, structuralism, essentially a *supplementary* method which acquires meaning only in concert with other methods, pretends to be *universal*, without any foundations whatsoever. This is perhaps one of its greatest drawbacks.

Not only do such pretensions inspire active opposition, which does not promote dispassionate judgments of the few constructive contributions of the school; there is something even more important. In a review of Shklovsky's *On a Theory of Prose*, A. Beletsky noted, "On the whole there are many interesting observations which would have objective value had not the author interrupted them with excursions into the sphere of generalisations. . . ."¹ The same can be said of some modern structuralists. There is a constant tendency to justify generalisations, constant and no doubt exhausting efforts to occupy a leading position; these prevent them from working out problems where structural methods might be useful.

This is true of the works of even the most interesting representatives of structural literary scholarship.

Lotman's *Lectures on Structural Poetics* was received by many as a promising work. There were many disputable and more than disputable statements, but the acuteness of the thought and unconventional opinions seemed to hint at something new. *The Structure of the Artistic Text* and *The Analysis of the Poetic Text* are more dispassionate, more academic books. Here is not so much a manifesto of an arising school, as the code and programme of structuralism. Many formulations have been polished, taking into account actual and possible criticism. A fair number of reservations, warnings, "preventive" polemical digressions and other such devices appear. They help to defend the books to a greater degree against critical onslaughts, but to not make them more convincing. The basic methodological propositions remain just as disputable and vulnerable; there is nothing essentially new here with respect to the author's earlier works. Yet the

¹ Aleksandr Beletsky, *Selected Works* in five volumes, Vol. 3, Kiev, 1966, p. 491 (in Ukrainian).

freshness and unexpectedness that were so appealing in the earlier works have vanished. One feels somehow disenchanted. . . .

Does not, in particular, the overconfidence in the universality of structural, semiotic methods take vengeance on itself? For in fact their sphere of activity is limited to the formal, logical level.

No doubt the formalisation of a system of knowledge, based on a monosemantic interpretation of concepts and establishing a given, monosemantic content, creates extensive opportunities for the logical, mathematical analysis of data and is in itself progressive. But this process has limits. "In principle the total formalisation of any science dealing with concrete objects is impossible since it is impossible to formalise cognition, with an endless process of enrichment of our knowledge, which has infinite aspects," write the authors of a collective work on modern philosophy and sociology.¹

Specialists conclude that, say, in mathematical logic and mathematics there exist problems that cannot be solved algorithmically. In other words the possibilities of an algorithm, or law, which for a given sphere of problems allows us to find the solution to any problem, are not without limits even in the sphere of the exact sciences.² What then can we say of art? One cannot reduce its interpretation to the formal, logical level; it depends on many factors of another sort—social, historical, psychological, etc. S. Lem's words, "If a procedure cannot be made monosemantic, it cannot be formalised,"³ are above all applicable to art. Polysemantics is one of the fundamental features of art, as reviewers of *Lectures on Structural Poetics* stress, and this "significantly narrows the possi-

¹ *Sovremennaya filosofiya i sotsiologiya v stranakh Zapadnoy Yevropy i Ameriki (Istoriko-filosofskiye ocherki)* (Modern Philosophy and Sociology in Western Europe and America: History and Philosophy), Moscow, 1964, p. 317.

² See P. S. Novikov, "Ob algoritmicheskoy nerazreshimosti problemy tozhdestva slov v teorii grupp" (The Algorithmic Insolubility of the Problem of the Identity of Words in the Theory of Groups), *Trudy matematicheskogo instituta im. V. A. Steklova*, XLIV, Moscow, 1955.

³ Stanislaw Lem, *Summa tekhnologii* (The Sum of Technology), Moscow, 1968, p. 220.

bilities for using the precise language of science so necessary for the construction of a sign system".¹

It should be admitted that the philosophical aspect of the problem is still foggy. Most confusing are the interrelations between structuralism and dialectics. Among structuralists there is a widespread view that the structural method is a dialectical method. The principle of opposition is seen, not only as a universal principle for the construction of artistic structures, but as the highest embodiment of the dialectical unity of opposing principles. "The essential element of structuralist theory," we read in the collection *Structure and the Meaning of Literary Works* (Prague, 1966), "is dialectics, the ability to comprehend the dialectic nature of reality by means of dialectical analysis." There are other views as well. French Marxist Lucien Sève writes that the structural method and the dialectical method do not coincide, but relate to each other as formal logic to dialectical logic. "The structural method could be characterised as a *very developed non-dialectical logic of intersections . . . of dialectical contradictions*. . . ."²

Indeed the revelation of dialectical contradictions is not one of the strong points of structuralism. "Dialectics includes historicism," notes Lenin. But structuralism is not all that ready to live harmoniously with history. It is far more liable to deal with the mutual contraposition of facts, phenomena, structures. These relations are reflected in the principle of opposition. This is similar, not to the dialectical unity of opposing principles, but to the binary system of cybernetics. The principle of opposition is helpful in that it deals with the *mechanism* of a phenomenon, but it would be an illusion to look on this principle as something universal and exhaustive from the viewpoint of the *dialectics*.

In this respect the Marxist scientific method has real perspectives. In his recent work on structuralism, L. Sève showed how profoundly and scrupulously Marx studies

¹ M. N. Andryushchenko, M. G. Dyukova, "Y. Lotman, Lektsii po strukturalnoy poetike" (Y. Lotman, Lectures on Structural Poetics), "Scientific Reports of Higher Educational Institutions", *Filosofskie nauki*, No. 1, 1967, p. 149.

² Lucien Sève, "Méthode structural et méthode dialectique", *La Pensée*, No. 135, 1967, p. 89.

the mechanism of transition from the C-M-C cycle (Commodity-Money-Commodity), that is, from the formula of the simple exchange of goods to the general formula of capital M-C-M (Money-Commodity-Money) in order to finally reveal the intricacies of the surplus value mechanism and the process of the class struggle. Not the ignorance of relatively unchanging mechanisms, but, on the contrary, concentration on these, the study of their function—not a self-sufficient, immanent study, but a study organically linked to the dialectics of living development—this is characteristic of the Marxist dialectical method. And it was precisely this method which allowed one to prove, in the words of Marx, that "the present society is no solid crystal but an organism capable of change, and is constantly changing".¹ Structuralism is not capable of such an analysis, says L. Sève, because it is basically an "anti-dialectical alternative to Marxism".²

French psychologist Jean Piaget's attempts to reconcile structure with genesis by means of his conception of "genetic structuralism" changes little here. Piaget reproaches Lévi-Strauss of examining structure as a given, not considering the problem of its origin, and contrasts this "static structuralism" to his own system. In his book *Structuralism* Piaget writes, "One sees that there is a necessary interdependence between genesis and structure: genesis is never simply a passage from one structure to another, but a formative passage that leads us from weak to strong formations; on the other hand, structure is never merely a system of various transformations, but a system whose roots are operational and based in previous formations of instruments of structural analysis."³

Commenting on the concept of "genetic structuralism" L. Sève does not deny that it has a kernel of reason, but does not see any basis for believing that Piaget's genesis, which he characterises as "gravitating toward an equilibrium", is the equivalent of the dialectical concept of development.⁴ Instead genesis and structure are brought

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, p. 21.

² *Problemy mira i sotsializma*, No. 5, 1971, p. 87; No. 6, pp. 82-83.

³ Jean Piaget, *Le structuralisme*, Paris, 1968, p. 121.

⁴ *Problemy mira i sotsializma*, No. 6, 1971, p. 82.

together once again through the principle of supplementation.

In their search for arguments confirming the dialectical nature of structuralism, its proponents have begun to turn more frequently to the latest achievements of the natural sciences, hoping to discover some important relations, transitions and intersections. The materials from the televised discussion "Vivre et Parler" are telling in this regard.

The leitmotif of the discussion was the common ground shared by linguistics, anthropology, biology and genetics—not merely common ground or analogies, but "far more profound convergence", in the words of one participant. Concepts related to information, structure, communication systems, and so on, were used to unite and cement these claims. The thesis that simple units combine to make complex phenomena (so vital to phonology) was particularly stressed. That was what ostensibly bridged the gap between linguistic systems and the systems of molecular genetics. Roman Jakobson, for example, proposes that the genetic concept of signals marking beginnings and endings "... in effect correspond to what Trubetzkoy called linguistic *Grenzsignale*, the signals of borders and limits". In his opinion if we compare the hierarchical principle of linguistics with the way in which the differentiating role of subunits is manifested in the process of genetic combination, we will be convinced that human language functions in a way analogical to the genetic code. "It is surprising," said Jakobson, "that up to now we linguists have been in the habit of lecturing our students that there is no other example of a similar hierarchy of empty elements which subsequently combine to create a wealth of expressive means. But here is the closest analogy! The essential result is that a finite number of these diverse degrees of coded elements make it possible to have messages of great length and astounding variety. The same is true of genetics—there are no completely identical two people—and of questions of discourse."¹

These ideas were supported and developed by other participants in the discussion "Vivre et Parler". Claude Lévi-Strauss: "The profound analogy between cellular genetics and language is the fact that simple elements devoid

¹ See *Les lettres françaises*, Février 14, 1968, p. 3.

of meaning combine to produce more complex and meaningful phenomena." François Jacob: "...We molecular geneticists have been struck by the similarity between genetic and linguistic combinations. . . ." Philippe L'Héritier: "...I think that the system of the transfer of information, of a considerable quantity of information, which language has made possible for the human race has introduced a new form of heredity to the biological world. . . ."

Only the future will show how justified such attempts to bring linguistic structuralism closer to the natural sciences are. Discussions of such problems are still ahead of us and one can only hope that they will be constructive.

But we should not lose sight of the fact that the nature and essence of any method and the limits of its application must be considered from philosophical and ideological perspectives as well as purely in terms of technical aspects. A *method* is pretending to be a *methodology*; and is even ready to offer itself as a substitute for *ideology*. Are we not then obliged to clarify these concepts, while noting the dialectical connection between them? It is difficult to agree with those for whom "any ideological criticism of the mathematisation of the social sciences is alien to the true contemporary requirements of a modern, scientific Marxist methodology".¹ Why *any*? Vulgarised criticism that rejects out of hand any possibility of the application of exact methods is alien to them; but this is *quasi*-ideological criticism. A profound, all-round analysis of ideological, philosophical and social aspects of that methodology, a clarification of its roots and its areas of contiguity with Marxism, as well as with philosophic and aesthetic systems inimicable to it, the formulation of a precise constructive viewpoint regarding this issue is both relevant and necessary. In any case we cannot but agree with B. Meilakh who writes that it would be a mistake to think that "methodological problems arising in the latest stage of modern science and related to cybernetics have no relation to literary scholarship".²

¹ L. Doležel, "Veroyatnostny podkhod k teorii khudozhestvennogo stilya" (Probability Approach to the Theory of Style in Art), *Voprosy yazykoznaniya*, No. 2, 1964, p. 29.

² B. S. Meilakh, "Predmet i granitsy literaturovedeniya kak nauki" (The Subject and Limitations of Literary Scholarship) in *Voprosy metodologii i literaturovedeniya* (Methodology and Literary Scholarship), Moscow-Leningrad, 1966, pp. 137-38.

Furthermore there is not the slightest need to disguise structuralism as Marxism in order to acknowledge the possibility of applying structural, semiotic methods in certain areas of art and literature.

In conclusion I want to cite words spoken in the mid-thirties which nevertheless seem very contemporary. "We still have some naïve people who believe that it is sufficient to say, 'Study a work's structure,' and everything will be clear. . . . But there is not one, *a priori* concept 'the structure of a work' which is valid for all systems of poetics. Structure is and will continue to be regarded in various ways."¹

The important thing to determine is *how* and *by whom* this concept is understood. And we must do this if we are to avoid any sort of extremes in our evaluation of structuralism with no stipulations, and if we are to determine the real possibilities of structural methods, their true place in the methodological arsenal of literary scholarship. This is required for scientific objectivity.

* * *

Still I am allowing myself to end on a subjective, if you like, emotional note. . . .

Naturally it would be naïve to think that love alone will allow us to draw "the drafts of what will be", as Velimir Khlebnikov said at some time, we need "chalk" as well, that is, science, precise knowledge, calculation. This is true of the study of art as well. Pushkin, for example, understood this. Together with one of his characters he mused on the reasons why, "thought springs from the poet's head fully armed with four rhymes, measured out in well constructed, equal feet". Chekhov also yielded to what he called "the enchanting temptation"—the wish to comprehend the law and formulas of artistic creation.

But the analytic scalpel can become a dangerous weapon. It depends on who is holding it. Ivanushka, the hero of poet Y. Kuznetsov's "Atomic Fairy Tale", does experiments on a frog, never suspecting that he is killing a

¹ I. Vinogradov, *Voprosy marksistskoy poetiki* (Marxist Poetics), Leningrad, 1936, p. 163.

beautiful princess. For him the main thing is that the frog "is suitable for a just cause" and without any hesitation he prepares the "white, regal body" and sends electrical current through it. . . .

*In cruel pain she passed away,
Through her veins the ages raced,
And a perspicacious smile played
On the fool's delighted face.*

Pushkin's Salieri is, of course, no Ivanushka. He is wise, but his wisdom is inhumane. Though he is a powerful man and an outstanding musician he does not realise that creation is a whole, that even though he is "versed in science" he cannot resurrect music once he has prepared it for dissection. His attempt to prove harmonies by mathematics turns out to be just an assassination.

Even if Salieri is talented, as Belinsky believed, it is the talent of a craftsman, a skilled worker, but not a creator. Skill is a prerequisite for creation, but it is not yet art. Salieri's career, which Mozart's life refutes, is evidence that true art is incompatible with even the finest craftsmanship. Therefore I cannot accept S. Eisenstein's interpretation. The latter wanted to dedicate a collection to "poor Salieri" and called him a "seeker".¹ Salierism is nevertheless seen by us, not as a symbol of a quest, of innovation, mastery, but as a principle hostile to creation, as a disease that preys on art. . . .

This disease is hereditary, it seems. . . . We can understand Shklovsky's attempts in *Bowstring* to distinguish OPOYAZ from Salieri. But Salieri's misfortune is not only that "he changed his path when he was advised to".² He wanted to serve art, but he did not love life and despised men.

What about formalism? Andrei Bely called upon "those who love art" to come to the privacy of a lonely study, to "catacombs", seeing nothing but thieves around them and Savonarolas surrounded by a blind crowd. The members of OPOYAZ set out to "dissemble" art, as a child would take apart his favourite toy, without thinking that

¹ Sergei Eisenstein, *Selected Works* in six volumes, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1964, pp. 33-34.

² V. Shklovsky, *Bowstring*, p. 44.

he might be deprived of it forever after. Can the structuralists (and I am speaking of its extreme forms and manifestations) in their obsession with finding the numerical cipher that will open the cherished lock of the gates of art be prepared to sacrifice not only harmony, but man to mathematics?

One scholar commented on *Mozart and Salieri* to the effect that Salieri's days are numbered, that he will not be able to bear the burden of his deeds or his sudden terrible doubt in his own genius. "The poet hid the actual denouement from us—a profound artistic device. We are certain, we know that Salieri has little love for life, that it often seems an unbearable wound to him."¹

This version has not yet been confirmed.

He is like the gloomy, importunate shadow of art, that Salieri. . . .

¹ A. Gornfeld, "Mozart and Salieri", *Biblioteka velikikh pisatelei* (The Great Writers Series), *Pushkin*, St. Petersburg, 1909, Vol. III, p. 126.

REQUEST TO READERS

Progress Publishers would be glad to have your opinion of this book, its translation and design, and any suggestion you may have for future publications.

Please send your comments to 21, Zubovsky Boulevard, Moscow, USSR.

PROGRESS PUBLISHERS
WILL SOON PUBLISH

FILIPPOV B. *Actors Without Make-Up*

In the 1930s Boris Filippov founded a club for Moscow's artists, a club which later grew into the Central Artists' Club.

In this book Filippov sums up, as it were, his long years in the world of art.

He talks about the leading lights of the Soviet theatre: Stanislavsky, Kachalov, Moskvina, Tarkhanov, Yablochkina, Barsova and other directors and actors. He recalls his meetings and talks with Gorky and Mayakovsky. And although these are not exhaustive portraits, only outlines sketches, they nonetheless contain many vivid details which enable the reader to become acquainted with outstanding figures in the world of Soviet art.